



CHAPTER 2 ALTERNATIVES

This chapter contains alternatives that describe different approaches to the management of public lands and resources in the Dillon planning area. Each alternative represents a complete and reasonable set of objectives, actions, and allocations to guide future management of public lands and resources in the planning area.

Four alternatives are presented in this chapter. One alternative describes the continuation of current, existing management and serves as the No Action alternative (Alternative A). This alternative is required by Council on Environmental Quality regulations and provides a baseline for comparison of the other alternatives. Three other alternatives (B-D) describe proposed changes to current management as well as what management would be carried forward into future management. They provide a range of choices for resolving the planning issues identified in Chapter 1.

Management measures outlined in the alternatives apply only to BLM-managed land and interests in the planning area. Changes made as a result of public comment and internal review are shaded in gray.

HOW TO READ THIS CHAPTER

Chapter 2 begins with introductory materials regarding development of the alternatives, then moves into a narrative of the alternatives organized by five main categories. These categories include:

- Resources
- Resource Uses
- Fire Management
- Special Designations
- Social and Economic Considerations

Each category includes several subsections which focus on a particular resource, resource use or program.

The narrative section provides a detailed description of goals, desired future conditions, management objectives, allocations, and actions. This narrative is followed by a table which summarizes the differences between the alternatives, but does not provide the detail described in the narrative section. A table comparing the impacts then follows the comparison of the alternatives and summarizes the differences in the projected impacts from implementation of each alternative. However, the effects of the alternatives are described in detail in the environmental consequences discussions presented in Chapter 4.

DEVELOPMENT OF ALTERNATIVES

The development of management alternatives for the Dillon Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement was guided by provisions of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) as well as planning criteria listed in Chapter 1. Other laws, as well as Bureau of Land Management (BLM) planning regulations and policy, also directed alternative considerations and focused the alternatives on appropriate land use plan-level decisions. To begin the alternative development process, goals and desired future conditions were identified by the planning team in consideration of public comment received through scoping as well as direction established by Bureauwide initiatives and mandates. The goals ensured that some level of consideration was provided to multiple and conflicting programs and directed the overall objectives and actions proposed within the alternatives. Standard operating procedures that result from law and regulation sometimes guided the goal statement, and thus the goal would be achieved under all alternatives.

Four management alternatives were developed to address the major planning issues and to provide direction for resource programs influencing land management. Each alternative emphasizes a different combination of resource uses, allocations, and restoration measures to address issues and resolve conflicts among uses, so program goals are met in varying degrees across the alternatives. Management scenarios for programs not tied to major planning issues and/or mandated by law often contain few or no differences in management between alternatives.

Alternative A, continuation of current management, is based on existing planning decisions that remain valid and current direction and policy. The remaining alternatives were developed with input received during scoping and focus question workshops, from work completed by subgroups of the Western Montana Resource Advisory Council (RAC), with expertise from the interdisciplinary planning team, and with input from local, State, federal and tribal governments. Vegetation management and treatment objectives were developed through the use of a model called SIMPPLLE—Simulating Patterns and Processes at Landscape scales. This model, among other things, allows the user to simulate future vegetation changes resulting from disturbance processes as well as simulate how vegetation patterns influence disturbance processes. Additional information on SIMPPLLE is detailed in **Appendix E**.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE ALTERNATIVES

All management under any of the alternatives would comply with state and federal regulations, laws, standards, and policies. A list of legal authorities is provided in **Appendix A**, and authorities are listed by program area at the front of each section in Chapter 3. Additionally, all alternatives include management to meet the *Western Montana Standards for Rangeland Health*. Each alternative considered in the Draft RMP/EIS allows for some level of support of all resources present in the planning area.

ALTERNATIVE A (NO ACTION)

Alternative A is the continuation of present management, also called “No Action”. This alternative would continue present management practices based on existing land use plans and other management decision documents. Valid decisions contained in the Dillon Management Framework Plan would be implemented if not already completed. Direction contained in existing laws, regulation and policy would also continue to be implemented, sometimes superseding provisions of the Dillon MFP. The current levels, methods and mix of multiple use management of public land in the planning area would continue, and resource values would receive attention at present levels. In general, most activities would be analyzed on a case-by-case basis and few uses would be limited or excluded as long as land health standards could be met.

ALTERNATIVE B (PROPOSED ACTION)

Alternative B, as modified based on public comment, still emphasizes a moderate level of protection, use, restoration, and enhancement of resources and services. Constraints to protect resources would be implemented, but would be less restrictive than under Alternative C. Alternative B would accommodate a higher level of production of food, fiber, minerals and services through the use of public land than Alternative C, though to a lesser degree than Alternative D. Resource values and fish and wildlife habitats would be restored and enhanced using a variety of tools, but to a lesser extent than Alternative C. Certain geographic areas containing sensitive resources would receive focused management.

This alternative represents the mix and variety of actions that, in the opinion of BLM, best resolve the issues and management concerns in consideration of all values and programs, and is thus considered BLM’s **Proposed Action**. This alternative includes recommendations made to the BLM by the Western Montana RAC, with some adjustments as necessary to meet policy and guidance and to address public concerns expressed as comments on the Draft RMP/EIS.

ALTERNATIVE C

Alternative C emphasizes active measures to enhance fish and wildlife habitats. Production of products from vegetation management in all habitats would be secondary to restoring healthy forest, upland and riparian areas. Production of food, fiber, minerals and services would be more constrained than in Alternatives B or D and in some cases and in some areas, uses would be excluded to protect sensitive resources. Under this alternative, constraints would more often be applied to broad habitats rather than focusing on specific sensitive resources in particular geographic areas.

ALTERNATIVE D

Alternative D emphasizes active management to produce food, fiber, minerals and services, and includes the highest level of forest and woodland treatments. In this alternative, constraints to protect sensitive resources would tend to be implemented in specified geographic areas rather than across the planning area. This alternative maintains current levels of fish and wildlife habitats but does not seek to increase those habitats. Developed recreation activities would be emphasized in Alternative D. Land health restoration activities would focus on areas that would also provide tangible products.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT ELIMINATED FROM DETAILED ANALYSIS

The following alternatives were eliminated from detailed study because they did not meet the purpose and need of the proposal or were outside of the technical or legal constraints of developing a land use plan for public lands and resources.

EXCLUSIVE USE OR PROTECTION

Alternatives proposing exclusive production or protection of one resource at the expense of other resources were not considered. FLPMA mandates BLM to manage public lands for multiple use and sustained yield. This eliminates alternatives such as closing all public land to grazing or oil and gas leasing, or managing only for wildlife values at the exclusion of other considerations. In addition, resource conditions do not warrant planning area wide prohibition of any particular use. Each alternative considered in the Draft RMP/EIS allows for some level of support, protection, and/or use of all resources present in the planning area.

DESIGNATION OF ALL ROUTES FOR YEARLONG TRAVEL

An alternative to designate all routes across BLM lands as open for yearlong travel without regard to current travel restrictions coordinated through interagency efforts was considered but dismissed. The Dillon Field Office has been a partner since the early 1980s with local, state and federal agencies across southwest Montana in development of the Southwest Montana Interagency Visitor/Travel Map and implementation of restrictions to address travel concerns and protect resource values. In addition, discussions on travel management by the Western Montana RAC and a working subgroup recommended BLM maintain the current level of restrictions as a baseline when considering alternatives.

ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

An alternative focused on adaptive management was not prepared as suggested by Beaverhead and Madison Counties. Instead, adaptive management will be incorporated across the alternatives as a process of monitoring, evaluating and incorporating new and changing information into the ongoing management of resources. In addition, BLM intends to use an adaptive management approach in the implementation of any of the selected alternatives to provide flexibility to adapt and respond to new knowledge or conditions. See **Appendix S** for more information on plan implementation, monitoring, and adaptive management.

CONTRACTING/STEWARDSHIP MANAGEMENT

Suggestions regarding different ways of implementing provisions of the resource management plan (contracting, stewardship contracting, etc.) were not included as alternatives in the Draft RMP/EIS. The purpose of the RMP is to provide an array of options to manage public land resources rather than an array of options for implementation. An implementation plan will be prepared as part of the Record of Decision/Approved Land Use Plan. BLM will likely consider using all types of approaches available within the constraints of federal law and regulation to implement provisions of the plan rather than relying on only one approach (e.g., all contracting, etc.).

DEFERMENT OF GRAZING TURNOUT UNTIL JULY 1 PLANNING AREA WIDE

Proposals to defer livestock turnout until July 1 across all grazing allotments were considered but not analyzed in detail. Processes are currently in place to make recommenda-

tions on grazing management on a site-specific basis during completion of the land health evaluations conducted on a watershed basis and subsequent allotment management planning if livestock grazing is determined to be a contributing factor in not meeting the standards. An area-wide prescription was not considered reasonable.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE ALTERNATIVES

The following narrative provides a detailed description of proposed management by the five categories: Resources, Resource Uses, Fire Management, Special Designations, and Social and Economic Conditions. Each resource/use/program presents Goals and Desired Future Conditions (DFCs) (where identified) followed by a description of objectives, management actions, and allocations proposed to achieve Goals and DFCs. Goals and DFCs are constant across alternatives. Objectives, management actions, and allocations may change. Management that is common across the alternatives is presented first, followed by descriptions of management by Alternatives A through D. Changes resulting from public comment and review of the Draft RMP/EIS are shaded in gray.

RESOURCES

AIR QUALITY (BLM Critical Element)

Goal—Meet the National Ambient Air Quality Standards under the Clean Air Act (as amended in 1977), and prevent significant deterioration of air quality within the Dillon Field Office Resource Area with all authorized actions.

Management Common to All Alternatives

Management under all alternatives would seek to minimize, or prevent, air quality degradation throughout the planning area by applying mitigation measures on a project by project basis.

Burn plans that include incident and cumulative air quality consideration would be developed for all prescribed burn treatments. The BLM would require permits where necessary for stationary facilities. The BLM will participate in state and tribal smoke management programs in accordance with the EPA Interim Air Quality Policy for Wildland and Prescribed Fires (EPA 1998) in addition to coordinating with the Montana/Idaho Airshed Group and Montana Department of Environmental Quality.

The BLM would continue to implement the *Western Montana Standards for Rangeland Health* to ensure that air quality meets Montana standards.

CULTURAL RESOURCES (including BLM Critical Element Cultural Resources and Native American Religious Concerns)

Management of Potential ACECs containing relevant and important cultural resource values (Beaverhead Rock, Everson Creek, Lewis & Clark Trail, Muddy Creek/Big Sheep Creek, and Virginia City Historic District) is described in the ACEC section.

Goal 1 – Preserve and protect significant cultural resources and ensure that they are available for appropriate uses by present and future generations.

Goal 2 – Reduce imminent threats from natural or human-caused deterioration, or potential conflict with other resource uses, by identifying priority geographic areas for new field inventory, based upon a probability for unrecorded significant resources.

Goal 3 – Ensure that all authorizations for land and resource use avoid inadvertent damage to federal and non-federal cultural resource in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

Goal 4 – Promote stewardship, conservation, and appreciation of cultural resources through educational and public outreach programs in accordance with the BLM Heritage Education program.

Goal 5 – Consult with Native Americans to identify any of their cultural values or religious beliefs that may be affected by BLM authorizations or actions.

Management Common to All Alternatives

Management proposed for all alternatives would identify, monitor, protect, and preserve significant cultural resources in accordance with Sections 106 and 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Impacts to National Register-eligible cultural sites resulting from federal undertakings would be avoided by project abandonment, project redesign, and as a last resort, mitigation of adverse impacts through data recovery or other alternative means. Identified cultural resources would be assigned to cultural resource use categories as defined in **Appendix C** under all alternatives. Over the life of the RMP cultural resource awareness programs would be designed to enhance the public appreciation of

cultural resource values. These programs include educational lectures/presentations as well as interpretive displays. The BLM would conduct legally required consultations with federally recognized Indian tribes as sovereign nations in a government-to-government relationship with the United States.

Alternative A

Current cultural resource management would prepare and implement cultural resource management plans for Everson Creek, Muddy Creek, Sheep Creek Wickiup, and Virginia City Historic District. Proactive cultural resources inventory (i.e. inventory completed in accordance with Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act) would be conducted as time allows, focusing on the following priority areas as reported by Earle (1980): Ruby Mountains; Centennial Mountains and Continental Divide; Axolotl Lakes area; West End—Lima Reservoir; Moore Creek and East Virginia City Hill; Rochester area; South Clark Canyon-North Tendency Mountains; Blacktail Ridge; Sweetwater Mountains; East Pioneer Foothills; Little Pioneer Foothills; Little Basin Creek and foothills; and the Glendale area.

Alternative B

While protecting currently recorded cultural sites in peril of destruction, proactive inventories of additional lands within the planning area would include half the acreage proposed in Alternative C. Monitoring, site stabilization, and outreach would be conducted as appropriate opportunities arise. This alternative proposes to do more than Alternative D, but less than Alternative C in regard to proactive management of cultural resources.

Building preservation/stabilization activities would be conducted as opportunities arise, depending upon the formation of outside partnerships. Consultation with tribal groups to identify and protect Traditional Cultural Properties would be continued. Archaeological research and education programs would be encouraged only at sites designated for *Experimental and Scientific Use* that are in imminent peril of damage or destruction by natural or man-caused events.

Proactive cultural resource inventory would be coordinated with BLM watershed assessment efforts in the planning area, and conducted on a watershed basis using a stratified random nonaligned sample of 40 acre quadrats. Stratification of the sample into high and low site probability areas will be based on suitability factors including distance from water, slope and aspect. An estimated 400 acres of inventory would be conducted in high site probability areas and 100 acres of inventory conducted in low site probability areas each year. Over the life of the plan (20 years) this would amount to a statistically valid sample of 10,000 acres of proactive inventory, or just over one percent of the planning area.

Alternative C

Under this alternative the largest number of acres in the planning area would be inventoried for cultural resources. Monitoring, site stabilization, and outreach activities would be pursued, and opportunities developed and maintained throughout the life of the RMP to ensure that cultural resources under administration of the DFO would be recorded and protected. This alternative proposes to protect the largest number of cultural sites and inventory the greatest number of acres over the life of the plan.

Condition assessments and stabilization plans would be completed for sites that contain standing structures and assigned to the *Conservation for Future Use* category. For sites assigned to *Traditional Uses* category, known site locations would be monitored on a regular basis. Outreach efforts would be intensified, including seeking funding to work with various tribes to identify Traditional Cultural Properties and establish procedures for long term preservation, protection, and access by tribal members. A long term monitoring program would be established for sites assigned to the *Scientific Uses* category to assess potential adverse impacts, and mitigate adverse impacts as appropriate.

Archaeological research and educational programs would be actively solicited to apply to sites assigned to the *Experimental Use* and *Scientific Use* categories.

Like Alternative B, proactive cultural resource inventory would be coordinated with BLM watershed assessment efforts in the planning area, and conducted on a watershed basis using a stratified random nonaligned sample of 40 acre quadrats. Stratification of the sample into high and low site probability areas will be based on suitability factors including distance from water, slope and aspect. An estimated 800 acres of inventory would be conducted in high site probability areas and 200 acres of inventory in low site probability areas. Over the life of the Plan (20 years) this would amount to statistically valid sample of 20,000 acres of proactive inventory, or just over two percent of the planning area.

Alternative D

Management under this alternative would be similar to that proposed in Alternative B except that inventories outside of compliance activities would take place only as time allows throughout the life of the RMP. This alternative would protect the fewest recorded cultural sites and inventory the least amount of land within the planning area.

As in Alternative B, building preservation/stabilization activities would be conducted as opportunities arise, depending upon the formation of outside partnerships. Consultation with tribal groups to identify and protect Traditional Cultural Properties would continue.

BLM would respond to requests from scientific or educational institutions to perform investigations at sites designated for *Experimental Use* and *Scientific Use*, but would not actively encourage such investigations.

Like Alternative B, proactive cultural inventory would be coordinated with BLM watershed assessment efforts in the planning area, and conducted on a watershed basis using a stratified random nonaligned sample of 40 acre quadrats. Stratification of the sample into high and low site probability areas will be based on suitability factors including distance from water, slope and aspect. Proactive inventory would be conducted as time allows and focus only on areas of high site probability.

FISH AND WILDLIFE

Management of Potential ACECs containing relevant and important fish and wildlife values, most often special status species are described in the ACEC section. These areas include Blue Lake, the Centennial Mountains, the Centennial Valley Wetlands, Ferruginous Hawk Nesting Area, and Westslope Cutthroat Trout Habitats.

Fish

Goal 1 – Manage habitat for resident coldwater species that are of high economic, social, or scientific values.

Goal 2 – Ensure that aquatic habitat is of suitable quality to support a diversity of plant and animal communities.

Desired Future Condition

Streams have sufficient flows provide habitat diversity and conditions that support cold-water fisheries

- A diversity of instream habitat structure is present
- Composition and quantity of streambed materials are appropriate for site potential
- Riparian vegetation and stream channel morphology contribute to maintaining appropriate water temperatures (generally <70 degrees F).
- Macroinvertebrate diversity and abundance reflect high water quality.

Management Common to All Alternatives

BLM would continue to participate in implementation of current cooperative agreements between the BLM and FWP across all alternatives. These include the cost share agreement for Westslope Cutthroat Trout (WCT) inventories and genetic testing, implementation of the Westslope Cutthroat Trout MOU, and the fluvial arctic grayling recovery efforts (see **Appendix D**). Emphasis on improving existing WCT

habitat and habitat restoration on fishery streams that are not in proper functioning condition will continue under all alternatives to varying degrees.

In accordance with the Westslope Cutthroat Trout Memorandum of Understanding and based on current arctic grayling status, habitats supporting arctic grayling of 99 to 100 percent genetically pure WCT will receive top priority for restoration and improvement. Next in priority will be habitats that support 90 up to 99 percent genetically pure WCT, Class I streams, and other fisheries, respectively.

Fish habitat surveys and monitoring would continue under all alternatives, and coordination with a number of entities and agencies, especially FWP and adjoining landowners would occur as opportunities to enhance fish habitat are identified. The Sheep Creek Aquatic Habitat Management Plan would be updated as necessary and implementation continued.

Alternative A

Under continuation of current management, fish habitat would be managed to meet the Western Montana Standards for Rangeland Health. Site-specific objectives would be developed as part of overall watershed assessments and habitat improvement projects would be identified and implemented where site-specific assessments have identified habitat concerns on fishery streams.

Alternative B

Under this alternative, the Western Montana Standards for Rangeland Health would be met but habitats along streams designated as Class 1 (blue ribbon) fisheries and those containing westslope cutthroat trout (90 percent genetic purity and above) would also be managed to achieve potential channel types and dimension or show an upward trend within 15 years with the intent of enhancing fish habitat.

Emphasis would be placed on protection of concentrated westslope cutthroat trout spawning areas in streams with 99 percent and above pure populations, using any and all management tools available. Habitat improvement projects would focus, among others, on projects to increase components of large woody debris in deficient streams. When the opportunity presents, water leasing would be pursued in cooperation with FWP for Class 1 (blue ribbon) streams.

Alternative C

Under this alternative, all habitats containing any fish values would be managed to achieve potential channel types and dimension within site capability, or show an upward trend within 10 years.

Emphasis would be placed on protecting westslope cutthroat trout spawning and fry emergence between April 15 and August 15, using any and all management tools available to reduce or eliminate impacts. Habitat improvement projects would be implemented on fishery streams with habitat concerns as identified through site-specific assessments as in Alternative A, but would focus on increasing security cover for all fish species. When the opportunity presents water leasing would be pursued in cooperation with FWP for any streams containing fish values.

Alternative D

Under this alternative, the Western Montana Standards for Rangeland Health would be met as a minimum, but habitats along streams containing westslope cutthroat trout (90 percent genetic purity and above) would also be managed to achieve potential channel types and dimension or show an upward trend within 15 years. As in Alternative B, habitat improvement projects would focus on projects to increase components of large woody debris in deficient streams. Water leasing would be pursued in cooperation with FWP only on perennial streams that contain special status fish species.

Wildlife

Goal – Ensure that native wildlife species are provided habitat of sufficient quantity and quality to enhance biological diversity and sustain their ecological, economic and social values is a goal common to all alternatives. Improve public awareness, understanding and support for resolving issues surrounding wildlife species conservation, management and ecology.

Desired Future Condition

- A full spectrum of biological communities, habitats, and their ecological processes is present.
- Populations of native plants and animals are well-distributed across the landscape.

Wildlife habitat discussions that describe alternatives (Chapter 2), the existing environment (Chapter 3), and impact analysis (Chapter 4) are all organized by coniferous forest habitat, sagebrush steppe habitat, and riparian/wetland habitat. Although some species specific management is discussed for priority wildlife species, these general habitat categories are used to simplify analysis and emphasize habitat management that can support a wide variety of wildlife species rather than focus on individual species.

Additional information on wildlife and riparian habitat management is found in several other sections of this document. Management specific to habitat supporting ESA listed and BLM sensitive species of wildlife is discussed under *Spe-*

cial Status Species – Animals. Discussions of wildlife considerations relative to grazing practices and leases, fencing, water development, and aspen protection are found by alternative in *Livestock Grazing and Vegetation – Riparian and Wetlands*. Forested wildlife habitat, and aspen management and rehabilitation, are discussed under *Vegetation – Forests and Woodlands*, and in *Vegetation – Rangeland*. Travel management discussions including wildlife considerations are discussed under *Recreation*. Aerial spraying of certain wildlife habitats is discussed under *Vegetation – Invasive Plants*. Wildlife stipulations for Oil and Gas leasing are described in the various alternatives in *Minerals – Leasable Minerals – Oil and Gas*. *Fire Management and Ecology* for fire treatments affecting wildlife.

Management Common to All Alternatives

Wildlife program guidance is to provide habitat and forage to support wildlife populations, and to support goals and management strategies in current FWP big game management plans. National wildlife conservation initiatives would be implemented. Vegetation treatment projects and management activities that influence wildlife habitat would be coordinated with FWP. Existing habitat management plans (HMP) - Hidden Pasture Bighorn, Blacktail, Red Rock Waterfowl, Sheep Creek Aquatic, Axolotl Lakes, and Wall Creek would be revised and updated, and approved habitat projects would be implemented. Functional wildlife access ramps would be installed on all water tanks on public lands. Fences that are identified as barriers to wildlife movement on public lands would be modified to accommodate wildlife passage, and new fence construction would follow “wildlife friendly” fence specifications in BLM Manual H1741-1.

Wetland habitat in the Centennial Valley would be managed under the Red Rock Waterfowl HMP to enhance habitat conditions with emphasis on maximizing opportunities to reestablish and maintain trumpeter swan occupancy. Current exclosures would be maintained and monitored to compare differences between areas grazed and ungrazed by livestock.

Priority habitats across the DFO include coniferous forest and sagebrush habitats that provide important big game winter habitat, sagebrush habitats that provide bighorn sheep yearlong or seasonal habitats; sagebrush habitats that provide sage grouse breeding, early brood rearing, or winter habitat; the mountain mahogany and sagebrush steppe habitat associations in the Lima Sweetwater Breaks key raptor management area, and all riparian and wetland habitats. Priority wildlife species are sage grouse, bighorn sheep, and the migratory birds listed by USFWS and Montana Bird Conservation Plan in **Appendix D**.

Alternative A

CONIFEROUS FOREST HABITAT

Proposed projects in forested habitat would analyze big game cover needs on a case-by-case basis to provide security and thermal cover for elk and mule deer. Stand structure, density and snag retention would be considered when determining wildlife needs in timber harvest and forest health operations. No timber harvest would be authorized in the following areas to protect wildlife values as specified in the 1979 Dillon MFP:

- Shaw Basin (200 acres in T1S, R4W, Sections 4 and 5)
- Noble Creek (80 acres in T4S, R4W, Section 5)
- North End of the Tendoy (200 acres in scattered tracts between Bell Canyon, Garfield Canyon, and Kate Creek)
- Divide Creek (60 acres in T12S, R14W, Section 9)

Cattle would continue to be the primary class of livestock authorized to graze on mountain mahogany habitat. Any impacts to mountain mahogany habitats from existing sheep authorizations would be mitigated through site-specific grazing management or eliminated if necessary.

SAGEBRUSH STEPPE HABITAT

National and Montana sage grouse conservation strategies would be used as the basis to address habitat management in the watershed planning process and for project level analyses. The availability of quality herbaceous cover and forage for wildlife species within moist meadow and sagebrush swales would also be considered on a case-by-case basis by implementing utilization recommendations or other management actions in activity plans. Activities such as prescribed burning, spraying, and mechanical alteration in sagebrush habitat that is important for wildlife species would not be authorized.

RIPARIAN WETLAND HABITAT

Wildlife needs would be considered on a case-by-case basis for any proposed projects in riparian/wetland habitat. Axolotls in Blue Lake and their habitat would continue to be protected by maintaining the lake fish-free, excluding livestock grazing, timber harvest, wheeled vehicle use, and any other activities within the lake’s watershed that could lead to the increased input of sediment or organic materials that could contribute to increased water temperature of Blue Lake.

Alternative B

CONIFEROUS FOREST HABITAT

Sustained activities of more than one week in duration associated with vegetation treatments (including, but not limited to, broad-scale burning and mechanical treatments) proposed under Alternative B would occur in no more than two

adjacent 6th order hydrologic units at a time to minimize big game displacement. These adjoining units would be maintained as disturbance-free as possible during operations. Vegetation treatments using prescribed fire would include site specific treatment strategies to minimize impacts during the breeding season of migratory birds.

Douglas-fir treatment unit size would be maximized within the limits of topography and stand size to enhance open-forest habitat for dependent species. Priority would be assigned to areas within historic bighorn sheep habitat where reduced forest canopy could enhance bighorn reestablishment or expansion such as Barton Gulch, the south Tobacco Root Mountains, and the south Ruby Mountains.

New road proposals would be considered as described in the *Transportation and Facilities* and *Travel Management and OHV Use* sections to minimize wildlife displacement and habitat fragmentation.

Cattle would continue to be the primary class of livestock authorized to graze on mountain mahogany habitat. Sheep grazing on mountain mahogany habitat would be mitigated through site specific management treatments, changed to cattle use, or eliminated where monitoring data indicates it is necessary.

SAGEBRUSH STEPPE HABITAT

Implementation of the National and Montana sage grouse conservation strategies would be conducted as described in Alternative A (which says) “National and Montana sage grouse conservation strategies would be used as the basis to address habitat management in the watershed planning process and for project level analysis.”

Sagebrush habitats would be managed so that the mid-scale level (mid-scale is assessed at a basin or sub-basin level) shrub cover should include a mix of height classes with herbaceous understory adequate for meeting seasonal habitat requirements for sage grouse (see the WAFWA Guidelines in **Appendix D**) and other wildlife species that use sagebrush habitat including wintering antelope and mule deer. Wildfire suppression efforts would focus on protecting large dense stands of sagebrush that are isolated from other dense stands.

- In habitats with predominately mountain big sagebrush, manage sites with the potential to support sagebrush in a manner that maintains ≥ 70 percent of those areas in canopy closure of 5 to 25 percent.
- In those habitats that include predominately Wyoming big sagebrush, manage sites with ecological potential to maintain sagebrush over at least 60 percent of those areas in a canopy closure of 5 to 25 percent.

- Maintain an herbaceous understory emphasizing multiple species of native forbs and grasses, recognizing that herbaceous productivity decreases at >10 -15% canopy cover (Tisdale et al. 1969).
- Emphasize restoration and rehabilitation of sagebrush in areas that are capable of supporting sagebrush and contribute to the distribution and connectivity of patches.

When making project decisions located in sage grouse habitat, objectives for sage grouse habitats and relevant information about sage grouse seasonal habitat will be considered when determining the desired resource condition. If specific issues regarding sage grouse are identified, applicable conservation actions or guidelines will be reviewed by interdisciplinary teams and considered in the decision-making process. None of the conservation actions or guidelines in the *Management Plan and Conservation Strategies for Sage Grouse in Montana* should be construed as mandatory or standards.

Impacts to migratory bird populations during breeding seasons would be minimized by using measures such as size of treatment area, timing, spacing of treatments, etc. when considering vegetative treatments (fire, fuels, habitat improvement, etc.).

New road proposals within sagebrush steppe habitat would be considered as described in the *Transportation and Facilities* and *Travel Management and OHV Use* sections to minimize wildlife displacement and habitat fragmentation.

Bighorn sheep habitat suitability would be enhanced in currently occupied habitat through activity planning by minimizing or avoiding competing uses (competition for forage and water) and disturbance factors (seasonal disturbance on lambing habitat).

Mountain mahogany habitats with sheep authorizations would be managed as described in Alternative A.

RIPARIAN WETLAND HABITAT

Under Alternative B, wildlife needs would continue to be considered on a case-by-case basis for any proposed projects in riparian/wetland habitat. Axolotl habitat in Blue Lake would continue under management described in Alternative A. Additional proposed management of riparian habitat relative to grazing practices, fencing, water development, and aspen protection is found by alternative in other sections of this document including *Livestock Grazing and Vegetation – Riparian and Wetlands*. Aspen management and rehabilitation are also discussed under *Vegetation – Forests and Woodlands*.

Alternative C

CONIFEROUS FOREST HABITAT

Big game security would be maintained by providing minimum 250-acre core blocks in 6th order HUCs within forested habitat types. Forest treatments that could increase palatable herbaceous and shrub compositions in dry Douglas-fir types would be emphasized.

Vegetation treatments using prescribed fire would only be conducted during the late summer or fall after migratory bird breeding is completed unless impacts can be mitigated. Forest treatment projects that could influence riparian habitat would be coordinated with riparian improvement projects to minimize or eliminate any potential for degradation of riparian or aquatic habitat.

Forest salvage treatments would be limited to <40 acres in size, and a minimum of 30 percent of standing dead trees would remain within the treatment area.

Mountain mahogany communities would be restored where Douglas-fir canopy is >15 percent and has overtopped mountain mahogany stands. Focus areas would include (but are not limited to) Barton Gulch/ Idaho Creek, Canyon Creek, Big Sheep Creek, and Hells Canyon. Under Alternative C, cattle would be the only class of livestock authorized to graze on mountain mahogany habitat. Existing sheep permits in mountain mahogany habitats would be cancelled and cancelled or relinquished cattle permits would be retired and closed to grazing as well. Forage would be allocated to wildlife.

SAGEBRUSH STEPPE HABITAT

Under Alternative C, the National and Montana sage grouse conservation strategies would be implemented by applying sage grouse guidelines from WAFWA guidelines as programmatic standards during activity and project planning.

Sagebrush habitats would be managed to provide suitable seasonal habitat for sage grouse as described in the Montana sagebrush/sage grouse habitat assessment protocol (supplement to the Montana sage grouse conservation strategy).

Sagebrush habitats providing sage grouse, mule deer and antelope winter range would be managed without manipulation treatments (prescribed burning, spraying, mechanical treatment).

Where vegetation treatments are implemented, livestock stocking rates would not be increased unless an increase would assist in achieving other resource objectives. Upland key forage species utilization by livestock would not exceed an average of 35 percent. In addition, a minimum of 30 percent of the area on all elk winter ranges would re-

ceive full growing season rest annually from domestic livestock grazing.

Vegetation treatments using prescribed fire would only be conducted during the late summer or fall after migratory bird breeding is completed unless impacts can be mitigated.

Bighorn sheep habitat suitability would be enhanced through activity planning by reducing or eliminating competing uses (competition for forage and water) and disturbance factors (seasonal disturbance on lambing habitat).

RIPARIAN WETLAND HABITAT

Axolotls in Blue Lake would continue to be protected by maintaining the lake fish-free, and excluding livestock grazing, timber harvest, wheeled vehicle use, and any other activities within the lake's watershed that could lead to the enrichment of Blue Lake. In addition, the upper Moran Creek watershed, including Blue Lake, would be withdrawn from locatable mineral entry.

Additional information on riparian habitat management relative to grazing practices, fencing, water development, and aspen protection is found by alternative in *Livestock Grazing and Vegetation – Riparian and Wetlands*. Aspen management and rehabilitation are also discussed under *Vegetation – Forests and Woodlands*.

Alternative D

CONIFEROUS FOREST HABITAT

Management under Alternative D would be very similar to Alternative B. Activities associated with vegetation treatments would occur in no more than two adjacent 6th order hydrologic units at a time to minimize big game displacement. These adjoining units will be maintained as disturbance-free as possible during operations.

Proposed projects in forested habitat would analyze big game cover needs on a case-by-case basis to provide security and thermal cover for elk and mule deer and stand structure, density and snag retention would be considered when determining wildlife needs in timber harvest and forest health operations.

SAGEBRUSH STEPPE HABITAT

National and Montana sage grouse conservation strategies would be implemented as described in Alternatives A and B.

Under Alternative D management, sagebrush treatments would be designed to affect no more than 30 percent of Class 4 and 5 stands within 20 years. A project level cumulative effects analysis would identify existing canopy coverage, and where potential treatment areas might exist on public lands.

RIPARIAN WETLAND HABITAT

Same as Alternative A.

GEOLOGIC RESOURCES

Management of Potential ACECs containing relevant and important geologic values (Block Mountain) is described in the ACEC section.

Goal – Provide opportunities for use of the geology of the area while protecting resource values.

Management Common to All Alternatives

Management proposed for all alternatives would protect Wedding Ring Rock (also known as Lime Kiln Arch), Squirrel Rock, and Road Agents Rock by signing and proposed withdrawal of each feature from mineral entry. Other mitigation measures to protect these or other features would be determined on a project-by-project basis.

PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Management of Potential ACECs containing relevant and important paleontological values (Centennial Valley Wetlands) is described in the ACEC section.

Goal 1 – Preserve and protect significant paleontological resources and ensure that they are available for appropriate scientific, educational, and where appropriate recreational, uses by present and future generations.

Goal 2 – Ensure that proposed land uses initiated or authorized by BLM avoid inadvertent damage to federal and non-federal paleontological resources

Goal 3 – Promote the stewardship, conservation, and appreciation of paleontological resources through appropriate educational and public outreach programs

Management Common to All Alternatives

A long term monitoring program would be established and continued at known paleontological locales to assess potential adverse impacts and propose actions to mitigate adverse impacts as appropriate. A minimum of one locality per year would be monitored under the program.

BLM would avoid impacts to paleontological remains by project redesign, project abandonment, and/or mitigation of adverse impacts through scientific recovery and analysis.

Paleontological resource awareness programs would be prepared and designed to enhance the public appreciation of paleontological resource values.

SOILS

Goal – Maintain or improve soil health or fertility, prevent, or minimize soil erosion and compaction, and reduce the possibility of mass wasting on unstable soils.

Management Common to All Alternatives

Across all alternatives consideration of soil conditions and types and their influence on management actions would occur on a case-by-case basis. Best Management Practices (BMPs) and mitigation measures would be implemented at the site-specific project level to maintain or improve the soil resource. Soils susceptible to compaction and erosion would receive greater consideration when assessing proposed activities, and activities proposed in slump or unstable areas would be addressed in consideration of the intensity of the disturbance.

During periods of drought the BLM would continue its policy to provide for the conservation and protection of the basic rangeland resources: soil and vegetation. Accomplishment of these objectives is more difficult during periods of drought. Normal grazing schedules and livestock management practices may have to be modified in order to conserve and protect soil. See the *Vegetation – Rangeland* section of Resources for more information on vegetative cover, and *Livestock Grazing* section under *Resource Uses* for more information regarding livestock use during periods of drought. In issuing a decision concerning livestock use, the procedure specified in 43 CFR 4160 would be followed.

**SPECIAL STATUS SPECIES—
GENERAL (including BLM Critical
Element Threatened and Endangered
Species)**

Goals and Desired Future Conditions are identified under the respective *Special Status Species* sections for *Birds and Mammals*, *Fish*, and *Plant Special Status Species* sections.

Management Common to All Alternatives

Under all alternatives, all management actions would be consistent with the Endangered Species Act and Bureau policy to ensure that habitat is provided for special status species, and proposed actions do not jeopardize the continued existence of a threatened or endangered species, or cause

its habitat to be adversely modified or destroyed. Sensitive species would be treated as candidate species for project impact analysis. Biological evaluations for projects would be completed for all special status plant and animal species using the joint format developed in conjunction with the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest (see **Appendix D**). Consultation with USFWS would occur when impacts are anticipated to threatened or endangered species or designated habitat. Cooperative implementation and monitoring of recovery plans, State of Montana management plans, and conservation strategies would continue for all listed, recently delisted, and candidate species. Management plans prepared for species not yet delisted would be implemented in coordination with the State of Montana and other appropriate agencies once the species is delisted by the USFWS. Conservation strategies for unlisted sensitive species would be considered when issuing land use authorizations.

SPECIAL STATUS SPECIES—BIRDS AND MAMMALS (including BLM Critical Element Threatened and Endangered Species)

Management of Potential ACECs containing relevant and important special status animal species within the Centennial Mountains, Centennial Valley Wetlands, and Ferruginous Hawk Nesting Area is described in the *ACEC* section.

Goal – Ensure the long-term, self-sustaining persistence of special status animal, plant and fish species in the Dillon Field Office.

Desired Future Condition

- Manage wetland habitats to support a healthy diversity and abundance of dependent wildlife species, with emphasis on special status species needs.
- Manage forested and sagebrush habitat within the historic range of variability for vegetation composition, canopy and structure to support a diversity and abundance of dependent wildlife species, with emphasis on special status species needs.
- Provide suitable habitat and condition to allow wildlife, species movement between large blocks of habitat, and seasonal and special habitats on a localized and landscape scale.

Management Common to All Alternatives

Cooperative implementation and monitoring of recovery plans, State of Montana management plans, and conservation strategies would continue for bald eagle, peregrine falcon, grizzly bear, wolf, Canada lynx, and sage grouse. As Canada lynx habitat information is refined or conditions change, LAUs with insufficient potential habitat to support

a home range of a breeding female lynx will be dropped. The Red Rock Waterfowl Habitat Management Plan (HMP) would be updated and revised to emphasize wetland habitat improvement to benefit wetland dependent Special Status Species. The HMP would implement actions necessary to maximize opportunities to reestablish and maintain trumpeter swan occupancy of Centennial Valley wetlands. This includes pursuing cooperative management on co-owned public/private wetlands to enhance habitat capabilities and water availability. BLM would continue to coordinate with APHIS in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding between the agencies regarding depredation management on public land.

All listed and sensitive species and their habitats are considered priority species or habitats. Grizzly bear and Canada lynx are the listed species receiving the most public land management emphasis in coniferous forest habitats. Special Status Species habitats often overlap or coincide with priority habitats identified under the general wildlife section.

Alternative A

Under continuation of current management, habitats supporting special status animal species would be assessed and managed in conjunction with implementation of the Western Montana Standards for Rangeland Health. Beyond actions provided for special status species under Management Common to All Alternatives, Alternative A would focus on management of bald eagle and peregrine falcon habitats. BLM would continue to participate in implementation of the Montana State bald eagle and peregrine falcon management plans, including annual production monitoring. Under Alternative A, the public land tract containing the Culver Pond bald eagle territory would be managed for retention. The Palisades area west of the Madison River area (T.10S, R.1W, Section 1) would be managed to protect potential peregrine falcon nesting by limiting human disturbance. Actions to optimize the prey base for peregrine falcons in the Centennial Valley would be taken.

Under current management, specific wildlife travel corridors or linkage corridors between major habitat areas would not be delineated, and potential impacts would be considered on a case-by-case basis during project and activity planning.

Management guidance for activities in Canada lynx habitat is provided in the Lynx Conservation Strategy and Assessment and would be considered by BLM at the project level. Management of grey wolf is conducted under the experimental reintroduction rules under which BLM has limited responsibility. Primary wolf monitoring and control actions are conducted by USFWS and APHIS. While the Dillon Field Office does not have any designated grizzly bear habi-

tat within the Yellowstone Recovery Zone, areas mapped in 2002 as grizzly bear use areas outside of the recovery zone do occur within the planning area. Grizzly bear needs and risk factors would be considered for any land use authorizations issued within this area. Needs of sensitive species, migratory birds, bats, and amphibians/reptiles and appropriate mitigation measures would be considered on a case-by-case basis during project and activity planning.

Alternative B

Under this alternative, coniferous forest, sagebrush steppe, and riparian habitats that support special status animal species would be managed as described in the Alternative B *Wildlife* and *Riparian Vegetation* sections.

Under Alternative B wildlife migration/dispersal corridors that provide connectivity for special status species such as lynx, grizzly bear, and wolf (as well as wildlife in general) would be managed to reduce conflicts between listed species and land use authorizations and activities.

Management actions would include:

- Evaluate projects and authorizations proposed on public lands in this area that may increase habitat fragmentation, create physical barriers to movement, or potentially increase mortality.
- Coordinate with others to identify critical barriers and potential passage locations, particularly on Interstate 15 at Monida and between Clark Canyon Dam and Barretts diversion.
- Implement food storage strategies from the Southwest Montana State Grizzly Management Plan on BLM lands in the Grizzly Bear use areas outside of the Yellowstone Recovery Zone if grizzly bears are delisted. Until the grizzly bear is delisted, the South Madison campground and undeveloped sites in the East Fork of the Blacktail and the Axolotl Lakes area would be monitored for food storage problems related to grizzly bear use and the potential need for bear proof trash containers. Major public land trailheads and access points in these areas and in the Centennial Mountains would be posted to advise recreationists about proper food storage to avoid back country conflict.
- Amend grazing permits in these areas to state that depredation losses are possible.
- Authorize no new sheep permits or conversion of cattle permits to sheep within wildlife dispersal/migration corridors (permits could continue to be transferred). This would not preclude the use of sheep as a resource management tool authorized on a case-by-case basis (for example, grazing sheep to help control weeds).

These actions would apply to all public lands that contain relatively intact habitat and migration corridors between units of the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, both

for special status species and general wildlife. **Map 3** depicts these areas. These primary linkages are located between:

- North Gravelly Range to Tobacco Root Mountains (VC Hill);
- South Madison Range to Gravelly Range to Blacktail Ridge;
- The Continental Divide from Red Rock Pass to Lemhi Pass, including the Tendoy Mountains and Jeff Davis/Maiden Peak area; and
- Bloody Dick /Big Hole Divide to the West Pioneer Mountains.

Actions to restore, enhance and maintain habitats for migratory birds, including special status bird species, would be implemented through cooperative joint venture programs under the North American Bird Conservation Initiative. Under this alternative, all bird species determined to be “Birds of Conservation Concern” within USFWS Region 10 would be considered in biological evaluations conducted for projects. Disturbance in habitats that sustain these species would be minimized during spring breeding seasons.

National and Montana sage grouse conservation strategies would be implemented as described in Alternative A.

Potential impacts to habitat for bats, amphibians and reptiles, and sensitive species would be considered on a case-by-case basis during project and activity planning. In addition, under Alternative B, the densest patches of sagebrush within sagebrush communities providing occupied pygmy rabbit habitat would not be treated. Activities contributing to the loss or mechanical damage of Basin big sagebrush and Wyoming big sagebrush “stringer” habitat would not be authorized under this alternative.

Ferruginous hawk breeding habitat would be managed to maintain nesting structures, sagebrush/grassland interspersed and enhance prey abundance. Within the Lima Foothills and Sweetwater Breaks key raptor management areas, proposed authorized activities would be evaluated for potential disturbance during the breeding season, and activities would be limited from March 1 through August 31 within one-half mile of nest sites on a case-by-case basis (see **Map 4**). No surface disturbances that would alter physical structures used by nesting ferruginous hawks (cliffs, rock outcrops, etc.) would be authorized within the boundaries of this area.

Alternative C

Coniferous forest, sagebrush steppe, and riparian habitats that support special status animal species would be managed as described in the Alternative C *Wildlife* and *Vegetation-Riparian* sections.

Under this alternative, wildlife migration/dispersal corridors would be delineated as described under Alternative B, but additional management actions would apply. Management actions to reduce potential risks to grizzly bear, wolf and lynx would include:

- Coordinate with others to identify critical barriers and potential passage locations, particularly on Interstate 15 at Monida and between Clark Canyon Dam and Barretts diversion.
- Evaluate projects and authorizations proposed on public lands in this area that may limit the effectiveness of the corridor by increasing habitat fragmentation, creating physical barriers, or potentially increasing mortality.
- Implement food storage strategies from the Southwest Montana State Grizzly Management Plan if bears are delisted.
- Amend grazing permits in these areas to state that depredation losses are possible.
- Do not authorize new, transferred, or converted sheep permits within these areas.

Food storage problems related to grizzly bear use would be monitored as described in Alternative B.

As described in Alternative B, actions to restore, enhance and maintain habitats that sustain migratory birds, including special status species, would be implemented through the North American Bird Conservation Initiative. All species listed as “Birds of Conservation Concern” within USFWS Region 10 would be considered in biological evaluations conducted for projects. Habitat disturbances would be minimized during spring breeding seasons. Restoration projects would be implemented to restore lost habitat composition and structure on grazing allotments where rangeland health standards are not being met.

National and Montana sage grouse conservation strategies would be implemented. Guidelines identified in the WAFWA guidelines would be applied to all actions as standards.

Actions considered for ferruginous hawks in Alternative B would be applied to all raptor breeding habitat under Alternative C management (see [Map 4](#)). Management would maintain habitat suitability, protect nesting structures, maintain sagebrush/grassland interspersions and enhance prey abundance. Proposed authorized activities would be evaluated for potential disturbance during the breeding season, and activities would be limited March 1 through August 31 within one mile of nest sites on a case-by-case basis. No surface disturbances that would alter physical structures used by nesting raptors (cliffs, rock outcrops, etc.) would be authorized within the Lima Foothills and Sweetwater Breaks key raptor areas.

In addition to actions provided for pygmy rabbit habitats in Alternative B, a habitat management plan/conservation strategy for pygmy rabbit would be developed for the planning area. BLM would also participate in range-wide pygmy rabbit conservation planning. Priority would be placed on acquiring soils inventory information for Beaverhead County to correlate with vegetation inventory to identify suitable pygmy rabbit habitat. Subsequent planning would identify local risk factors that constrain population viability and distribution for consideration in project level analysis.

Alternative D

Habitats for special status species would be managed through the implementation of the Western Montana Standards for Rangeland Health under Alternative D. Management described in Alternative D for *Wildlife* and *Vegetation* sections would also be implemented.

Alternative D would not delineate any specific wildlife travel corridors or linkage corridors between major habitat areas, and potential impacts would be considered on a case-by-case basis during project and activity planning.

Food storage problems related to grizzly bear would be monitored as in Alternative B. In addition, grizzly bear use areas outside of the Yellowstone Recovery Zone as defined in 2002 (see [Map 5](#)) would be managed to reduce risk factors to grizzly bears and provide habitat using the same management actions specified in Alternative B.

Habitat needs for sensitive species, migratory birds, bats, and amphibians/reptiles would be considered on a case-by-case basis during project and activity planning.

Ferruginous hawk breeding habitat would be managed to maintain nesting structures, sagebrush/grassland interspersions and enhance prey abundance. Within the Lima Foothills and Sweetwater Breaks key raptor management areas, proposed authorized activities would be evaluated for potential disturbance during the breeding season, and activities March 1 through August 31, within one-half mile of nest sites would be limited on a case-by-case basis. No surface disturbances that would alter physical structures used by nesting ferruginous hawks (cliffs, rock outcrops, etc.) would be authorized within the boundaries of this area.

SPECIAL STATUS SPECIES—FISH (including BLM Critical Element Threatened and Endangered Species)

Management of Potential ACECs containing relevant and important special status fish values (Westslope Cutthroat Trout Habitats) is described in the ACEC section.

Goal – Ensure the long-term, self-sustaining persistence and maintain the genetic diversity of the individual populations of westslope cutthroat trout in the Dillon Field Office. Ensure the long term self-sustaining persistence of fluvial and adfluvial arctic grayling in the Dillon Field Office area.

Desired Future Condition under the *Fish* section would also apply to Special Status Species Fish.

Management Common to All Alternatives

The BLM would continue to participate in implementation of the MOU and Conservation Agreement for WCT in Montana, and participate in implementation of the Restoration Plan for fluvial arctic grayling across all alternatives. This participation would also include initiating and performing long-term fish habitat and water quality surveys to document and monitor trends in fishery habitat.

The BLM would encourage maintenance work on diversion structures to reduce WCT and arctic grayling loss in irrigation ditches.

The BLM would initiate habitat restoration on special status species fishery streams that are Functioning-At Risk (FAR) or Nonfunctional (NF), and develop a cooperative agreement with Fish, Wildlife and Parks for adequate protection and access to the fluvial arctic grayling brood pond within the Axolotl Lakes area.

In accordance with the Westslope Cutthroat Trout Memorandum of Understanding and based on current arctic grayling status, habitats supporting arctic grayling of 99 to 100 percent genetically pure WCT will receive top priority for restoration and improvement. Next in priority will be habitats that support 90 up to 99 percent genetically pure WCT, Class I streams, and other fisheries, respectively.

The BLM would coordinate with FWP to manage beaver where site-specific assessments have identified concerns with beaver presence or absence in relation to sensitive fish species habitat.

Alternative A

Habitat management objectives for special status fish would follow current guidelines. Management would follow the guidelines described in the MFP, WCT MOU, Grayling restoration plan and guidelines identified under management common under special status-general and special status-fish in the RMP.

Alternative B

Management would provide for WCT habitat across the field office. WCT habitat would be managed to achieve potential or an upward trend within 15 years based on channel type and dimensions present. Habitat would be maintained or improved for WCT with emphasis on high purity streams and minimizing impacts during critical time periods.

Where surface disturbing mineral exploration or development takes place within 100 feet of the centerline of any stream containing westslope cutthroat trout with a genetic purity of 90 percent or greater, full restoration of disturbed habitat would be required. A bond equal to 100 percent of the amount needed for full restoration of disturbed areas would be required, and impacted areas would be restored to proper functioning condition. A Plan of Operation would be required before production activities are initiated.

Where fish habitat is found to be in less than PFC condition, habitat improvements would be initiated. No beaver introductions or active beaver dam removal would occur without coordination with FWP.

Alternative C

WCT habitat would be managed to achieve potential or an upward trend within 10 years based on channel type and dimensions present. Management would emphasize WCT habitat improvement across the field office. WCT streams with purity levels of 90 percent or greater would be withdrawn from mineral entry. Where fish habitat is found to be in less than PFC condition, habitat improvements would be initiated. On streams where decadent beaver dams are found to be restricting passage they would be removed or modified to allow WCT passage. Dams that are active would not be removed. BLM would coordinate with FWP on water leasing for WCT and Grayling streams and re-introduction of fluvial grayling into Big Hole headwater streams.

Alternative D

WCT habitat would be managed to achieve potential or an upward trend within 15 years based on channel type and dimensions present. Habitat would be maintained for WCT with emphasis on 100 percent purity streams and minimizing impacts to high density 100 percent pure spawning areas. Non functional stream reaches would have riparian management applied on a site specific basis. PFC streams would be managed to achieve potential using all tools available. WCT streams would not be withdrawn from mineral entry. Where fish habitat is found to be in less than PFC condition, habitat improvements would be initiated. Beaver dams would not be removed nor would beaver be introduced.

SPECIAL STATUS SPECIES – PLANTS

Management of Potential ACECs containing relevant and important special status plant species (Big Sheep Creek Basin, Centennial Mountains, Centennial Sandhills) is described in the ACEC section.

The following goals are identified for all alternatives:

Goal 1 – Identify, conserve, and monitor rare, vulnerable, and representative habitats, plant communities, and ecosystems to ensure that there is a self-sustaining persistence of special status plants within the DFO.

Goal 2 – Ensure that proposed land uses initiated or authorized by BLM avoid inadvertent damage to federal and non-federal habitats supporting special status plants and plant communities.

Goal 3 – Promote public awareness, appreciation and understanding of rare plants and their habitats.

Desired Future Condition

The necessary habitat, biological processes, and disturbance regimes will be present on DFO lands to maintain or enhance populations of special status plant species.

Management Common to All Alternatives

Under all alternatives, BLM would continue to assist in maintaining Montana's web-based rare plant field guide and staff would assist with programs and training sessions to educate weed crews to recognize and avoid special status plants and their habitats.

Monitoring efforts and research studies on special status plants and associated plant communities would be considered under all alternatives, and inventory efforts would be continued. The potential for adverse effects on BLM sensitive plants would be considered during project level planning and mitigation measures recommended. [Map 6](#) depicts locations of BLM special status plants based on inventory completed through the 2002 field season.

Alternative A

Under continuation of current management, existing inventory information would be used to determine the presence/absence of BLM special status plant populations and mitigation measures to protect BLM special status plants would be considered and implemented on a case-by-case basis. Habitats containing BLM special status plants would be considered during Standards for Rangeland Health assess-

ments and management recommendations made on a case-by-case basis.

Management of BLM special status plant species and communities would be taken into account during the case-by-case evaluation of changes in season of use for livestock grazing and applications for grazing, as well as other BLM authorized activities.

Alternative B

Under this alternative, field inspections to identify special status plant species would be conducted prior to authorizing surface disturbing activities. Waivers for on-the-ground inventory would be granted in areas determined to have low potential based on previous research.

Beyond the management provided under Management Common to All Alternatives, Alternative B would not allow activities that disturb mineral soil such as blading, plowing, ripping, chaining, etc.) within the boundaries of populations of BLM special status plants. Management would be adjusted on a case-by-case basis when Standards for Rangeland Health are not being met or when monitoring of BLM special status plants indicates unacceptable impacts.

Livestock grazing authorizations would be limited to the non-growing season in the following allotments or pastures to benefit BLM special status plant species:

- Frenchie Allotment # 10121
- Timber Butte Allotment #20168
- Cold Spring Allotment #20215
- the Spring Creek Pasture of the Stonehouse Allotment #30005

In addition, no term grazing permit or lease would be issued in the Eli Spring area (south half of section 3, north half of section 10, T9S, R11W) though temporary non-renewable grazing could be authorized to meet objectives.

Habitat management plans and conservation strategies would be adopted or developed under this alternative, in concert with watershed assessments, for BLM special status plant species and habitats that occur on public land. In riparian habitats, priority would be placed on the following species:

- *Carex idahoensis* (Idaho Sedge)
- *Primula Alkalina* (Alkali Primrose)
- *Taraxacum eriophorum* (Rocky Mountain Dandelion)
- *Thalictrum alpinum* (Alpine Meadowrue)

In sagebrush-steppe habitats, priority would be placed on the following species:

- *Penstemon lemhiensis* (Lemhi Beardtongue)
- *Astragalus scaphoides* (Bitterroot Milkvetch)
- *Astragalus terminalis* (Railhead Milkvetch)

Alternative C

Field inspections would be conducted prior to authorization of surface disturbing activities as described in Alternative B. Under Alternative C, activities that disturb mineral soil such as blading, plowing, ripping, chaining, etc.) would not be allowed within one-quarter mile of populations of BLM special status plants. This differs from Alternative B by adding a buffer area.

Rather than consider livestock grazing adjustments on a case-by-case-basis, habitats supporting populations of BLM special status plant species susceptible to herbivory would be provided rest or growing season deferment from livestock grazing two years out of three years. Genera currently on the BLM special status plant list that are susceptible to herbivory include the following.

- *Carex*
- *Elymus*
- *Penstemon*
- *Taraxacum*

Map 7 shows the allotments affected based on current inventory.

The same allotments identified in Alternative B would be limited to non-growing season use to benefit BLM special status plant species. The Eli Spring area (south half of section 3, north half of section 10, T9S, R11W) would also be managed as described in Alternative B, but in addition the road would be rerouted around the spring to avoid special status plant habitat and to maintain Eli Spring in a natural, undeveloped state.

Habitat Management Plans (HMPs) focusing on protecting and conserving special status plants and associated plant communities would be developed under Alternative C for particular areas rather than by species. Priority would be placed on the following areas and species:

Upper Big Sheep Creek Watershed

Agastache cusickii (Cusick's Horse-Mint)
Carex idahoa (Idaho Sedge)
Primula Alcalina (Alkali Primrose)
Sphaeromeria argentea (Chicken Sage)
Taraxacum eriophorum (Rocky Mountain Dandelion)
Thalictrum alpinum (Alpine Meadowrue)

North Tendoy Mountains

Lomatium attenuatum (Taper-tip Desert parsley)
Lesquerella pulchella (Beautiful Bladderpod)
Carex idahoa (Idaho Sedge)
Sphaeromeria argentea (Chicken Sage)

Sage Creek Watershed

Astragalus terminalis (Railhead Milkvetch)

Carex idahoa (Idaho Sedge)
Sphaeromeria argentea (Chicken Sage)

Centennial Valley

Astragalus ceramicus var *apus* (Painted Milkvetch)
Carex idahoa (Idaho Sedge)
Elymus flavescens (Sand Wildrye)

Bannack Bench/Badger Pass/Rocky Hills

Penstemon lemhiensis (Lemhi Beardtongue)
Astragalus scaphoides (Bitterroot Milkvetch)
Astragalus terminalis (Railhead Milkvetch)
Sphaeromeria argentea (Chicken Sage)
Lesquerella pulchella (Beautiful Bladderpod)
Taraxacum eriophorum (Rocky Mountain Dandelion)
Lomatium attenuatum (Taper-tip Desert parsley)

Alternative D

Field inspections would be conducted prior to authorization of surface disturbing activities as described in Alternative B. Activities that disturb mineral soil such as blading, plowing, ripping, chaining, etc.) would not be allowed within populations of BLM special status plants.

Remaining management would be similar to provisions of Alternative A. Habitats containing BLM special status plants would be considered during Standards for Rangeland Health assessments and management recommendations made on a case-by-case basis. Management of BLM special status plant species and communities would be taken into account during the case-by-case evaluation of changes in season of use for livestock grazing and applications for grazing, as well as other BLM authorized activities.

VEGETATION – FORESTS AND WOODLANDS

Goal – Manage forests and woodlands to sustain their health and diversity.

Desired Future Condition for Forests and Woodlands (after 20-50 years of management)

- Curl leaf mountain mahogany occupy historic range and are in stable or improving condition.
- Douglas-fir/sagebrush interface represents an open savannah aspect. Rocky Mountain juniper and limber pine are restricted to historic sites where wildland fire frequency is limited by lower site productivity and sparse fuels. Both species occur in low densities in association with vigorous shrubs, grasses, and forbs (where site potential permits).
- Douglas-fir forests contain healthy stands of site-appropriate species. Stands are relatively open, with tree

density within site capacity. Low intensity fires can be accommodated without excessive loss of trees, and insect and disease occurrence is at endemic levels. Late successional characteristics will be maintained or restored through management.

- Lodgepole pine and spruce/fir forests are represented by a diversity of age classes and structure.
- White bark pine forests occupy historic range and are in stable or improving condition.

Quaking aspen groves occupy historic range and are in stable or improving condition. Aspen stands contain multi-aged stems and adequate regeneration to perpetuate the stand. Age classes are mostly less than 100 years old with good understory diversity.

Management Common to All Alternatives

Forests within the planning area are typical of the drier intermountain region of the Northern Rockies, and are directly influenced by the physiographic effects of having the Continental Divide on three sides of the planning area. Under all alternatives, vegetation planning would be coordinated with managers of lands adjacent to site-specific proposals for a collaborative approach. All proposed vegetation treatment projects would be coordinated with FWP in consideration of wildlife habitat concerns. No mechanical treatments would occur on slopes of 70 percent or greater and grazing would be excluded on aspen restoration treatments of 100 acres or less until aspen regeneration is a minimum of five feet tall on average. Insect infestations of forests and woodlands would be treated with sanitation cutting or other methods as appropriate based on a case-by-case review and analysis and salvage harvest would also be considered on a site-specific basis across alternatives. Wood products would be provided as a result of any vegetation treatments where appropriate. **Map 8 (oversized)** depicts vegetation types including those for forests and woodlands in the planning area.

Alternative A

Under current management, forest inventory would continue to be conducted but no particular completion date would be set. Existing inventory information would be converted into the Forest Vegetation Information System (FORVIS) or other systems as specified in policy and guidance throughout the life of the plan.

Management under Alternative A would continue existing forestry practices as outlined in the 1979 Management Framework Plan (MFP) and consider implementation of recommendations in the Pioneer and Gravelly Landscape Analyses. Geographic restrictions from forest management that were applicable from the MFP would still apply, leaving approximately 82,000 acres available in the commercial forest base. Ecosystem forest management prescriptions that emphasize desired forest structure would be applied on

forest and woodlands in the Pioneers and Gravelly Landscape Analysis areas, and could or could not provide wood products. Conventional silvicultural prescriptions that emphasize forest products would be applied on all other forest and woodlands. A variety of tools would be utilized to meet both types of prescriptions. These could include conventional and non-conventional logging techniques along with some prescribed fire where fuel load concerns cannot be met by harvest or mechanical operations alone. **Map 9** depicts vegetation treatment areas under Alternative A.

Ecosystem forest management prescriptions applied in the warmer and drier habitat types dominated by Douglas-fir would be typified by thinning from below in the low to mid elevation Douglas-fir and Douglas-fir limber pine mixed stands. The smaller diameter trees would be cut and either removed if they have sufficient commercial value or underburned in these stands. Some removal of the larger diameter classes would be allowed but not emphasized through individual tree selection prescription.

Silvicultural prescriptions on the more productive growing sites typified by cool moist habitat types dominated by lodgepole pine would consist of clearcutting, clearcutting with reserve trees, patch clearcutting, thinning, and/or other partial cutting techniques in lodgepole pine stands. Selection cutting, individual selection, group selection, thinning, seed tree cutting and or other partial cutting techniques would be used in Douglas-fir and some other conifer stands such as mixed Douglas-fir, sub-alpine fir and Engelmann spruce stands.

Emphasis for whitebark pine restoration would focus on lands in the Pioneer and Gravelly landscapes. Upper elevation stands containing whitebark pine components would be opened up by individual or group selection to promote whitebark pine regeneration.

Alternative A would also place emphasis on treating stands throughout the planning area that have missed two or more fire cycles (Condition Class 3).

Timber salvage operations would be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Alternative B

Inventory efforts under this alternative would be conducted with a target completion date of 2020. As in Alternative A, existing data would be converted into FORVIS as current policy directs, or other systems as necessary throughout the life of the plan.

In Alternative B, management of forest and woodland vegetation would be emphasized in three geographic areas. These are the southern Tobacco Roots, the southern Ruby Mountains, and the Barton and Idaho Gulch areas. All habi-

tat types would be treated in these three areas. **Map 10** depicts Vegetation treatment areas under Alternative B.

It is estimated that approximately 35,000 acres of conifer and aspen habitat would be treated to improve forest health and enhance habitat over the life of the plan. This includes an estimated 12,000 acres targeted for aspen restoration, up to 14,000 acres within the three geographic focus areas, and another 9,000 acres outside of the focus areas. Mechanical treatments of forest and woodland vegetation associated with prescribed fire treatments would be allowed in Wilderness Study Areas under Alternative B where it is determined wilderness values would be enhanced. Use of prescribed fire and associated tools in WSAs would be limited to areas where fire history evidence correlates to historically frequent fire events. An additional condition would be that treatment of these areas result in fuel configurations that would allow the potential to effectively manage the movement of fire if it were to move out of the WSA. Subsequent fire suppression activities would then be limited to locations outside the WSA except where emergencies threaten life or adjacent private lands.

Some of the more productive areas would have commercial production emphasis but this would be intermixed with stand structure prescriptions for habitat objectives. Generally, Warm and Dry, Warm and Very Dry (including woodlands) and Warm and Moist habitat types would be thinned from below to remove smaller diameter trees and or receive a commercial thinning to remove both small and intermediate size trees. Some removal of the larger diameter classes would be allowed but not emphasized via individual tree selection prescription.

Where large trees exist and the stand exhibits some late successional characteristics, management would maintain or restore these characteristics.

Cool moist habitat types would be managed through clearcutting, clearcutting with reserve trees, patch clearcutting, and/or thinning in lodgepole pine stands or mixed lodgepole pine conifer stands. Partial cutting techniques would be emphasized when possible over clearcutting in lodgepole pine stands. The prescription emphasis in cool moist habitat types would be on re-introducing a diversity of age classes where this is lacking. Selection cutting, individual selection, group selection, thinning and or seed tree cutting would be used in mid to higher elevation Douglas-fir and some other conifer stands such as mixed Douglas-fir, sub-alpine fir and Engelmann spruce stands. Utilization of wood products would be allowed where feasible to do so in conjunction with other resource concerns.

Whitebark pine treatment would be emphasized in the three specific geographic areas described above. Utilization of prescribed fire for post activity treatments of slash materi-

als would be an integrated into all forest management activities.

Beyond the emphasis on the three geographic areas as described, thinning projects would be implemented in the Warm and Dry, Warm and Very Dry (including woodlands) and Warm and Moist habitat types throughout the rest of the field office. The objective would be to reduce tree density in crowded stands that are primarily Douglas-fir with some intermixed limber pine and or Rocky Mountain juniper. Again, utilization of wood products would be allowed where feasible to do so in conjunction with other resource concerns. There would be an emphasis on treating stands throughout the planning area that have missed two or more fire cycles (Condition Class 3). As mentioned above, the use of post activity prescribed fire to reduce fuel levels would be integrated into management activities.

Prescribed fire would be incorporated into all management activities where possible to maximize aspen regeneration. Maintenance of these stands in out years to remove re-invading conifers would undergo analysis in future planning documents.

Timber salvage operations would be considered on a case-by-case basis where they occur within the base acreage. Where insect infestations such as spruce budworm have the potential to go from endemic to epidemic proportions, sanitation cutting would be implemented.

Alternative C

Inventory efforts under Alternative C would be the same as described in Alternative B.

An estimated 19,000 acres of forest and woodland vegetation would be treated in Alternative C, with an emphasis on aspen restoration on 12,000 of these acres as described in Alternative B. **Map 11** depicts vegetation treatment areas under Alternative C.

The majority of the conifer treatments in the remaining 7,000 forest and woodland treatment acres would be confined to the Warm and Dry to Warm and Very Dry habitat types (including woodlands) that have missed two or more fire cycles (Condition Class 3). These treatments would also be focused in wildland urban interface areas. The primary management prescription would be thinning from below concentrating on the smaller diameter classes. When needed to manage for stand structure diversity or larger diameter structure classes within stands, group selection, individual tree selection, and seed tree prescriptions would be utilized. Prescribed fire would be used as described in Alternative B. However, mechanical vegetation treatments would not be allowed within Wilderness Study Areas even if wilderness values could be enhanced.

There would be no proactive forest management in the Cool Moist habitat types and management for whitebark pine would not be considered in this alternative. Utilization of commercial wood products would be allowed but not emphasized. Salvage harvest treatments would be considered in all habitat types as described in Alternative B, except treatments would be limited to <40 acres in size, and a minimum of 30 percent of standing dead trees would remain within the treatment area.

Alternative D

Inventory efforts under Alternative D would be the same as described in Alternative B. This alternative would emphasize the commercial use of wood products resulting from forest and woodland treatments.

Up to 51,000 acres of forest and woodland vegetation could be treated in Alternative D to manage for healthy, diverse forests and to restore aspen. Aspen restoration treatments would be implemented on an estimated 14,000 acres. The area targeted for aspen restoration is larger than proposed in Alternatives B and C because treatments would be expanded to include smaller remnant patches or clones throughout the planning area. [Map 12](#) depicts vegetation treatment areas under Alternative D.

An estimated 37,000 acres outside of aspen restoration areas in all habitat types would be eligible for treatment in this alternative. The tools for accomplishing these treatments would be similar to or identical to those described in Alternative B. Treatment of stands that have missed two or more fire cycles (Condition Class 3) as well as those stands approaching this condition would be emphasized. Mechanical treatments of forest and woodland vegetation associated with prescribed fire treatments would be allowed in Wilderness Study Areas under this alternative where it is determined wilderness values would be enhanced.

Whitebark pine restoration would be the most expansive under this alternative. The tools for accomplishing these treatments would be similar to or identical to those in Alternative B. Salvage harvest would be the same as Alternative B.

VEGETATION – INVASIVE AND NON-NATIVE SPECIES, including NOXIOUS WEEDS (BLM Critical Element)

Goal - Prevent the introduction and spread of invasive and noxious plants.

Desired Future Condition

New infestations of noxious weeds are not common across the landscape, and existing large infestations are declining.

Management Common to All Alternatives

Montana State designated noxious weeds would be managed according to the principles of integrated pest management found in *Partners Against Weeds: An Action Plan for the Bureau of Land Management* (USDI-BLM 1996b), the Montana Weed Management Plan (Duncan 2001), and the Montana Noxious Weed Act. These plans outline the principles of integrated pest management which will continue to be followed. The basic principles of integrated pest management are:

- Education and awareness for staff, cooperators, and the public
- Prevention and early detection of all noxious weed species
- Inventory of public and cooperator lands for noxious weeds
- Control of noxious weeds by various methods that include cultural, physical and mechanical, biological, and chemical controls or other land practices
- Monitoring of treatment areas

Cooperative agreements with Beaverhead and Madison counties for noxious weed control would be continued. Development of Cooperative Weed Management Areas where all the landowners are cooperatively working to contain or eradicate noxious weeds within designated areas would be encouraged. Treatment methods include chemical, cultural, mechanical, and biological. Invasive species such as cheat grass would be evaluated in site-specific projects associated with the watershed analysis. Perennial vegetation would be reestablished in a timely manner to rehabilitate disturbance areas. Native species would be used for rehabilitation and reclamation unless site specific evaluations indicate that nonnative species are needed to ensure success or rapid vegetative reestablishment.

Alternative A

Noxious and non-native vegetation would continue to be managed under the existing law, regulation, and management plans. Areas closed to aerial application of herbicides and pesticides would be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Alternative B

Management would be the same as Alternative A, except that project level analysis of aerial application of herbicide and pesticides would emphasize protection of special status plants and associated plant communities in the Centennial Sandhills and Big Sheep Creek Basin, occupied pygmy rabbit habitat, sage grouse breeding habitat, and mountain mahogany habitats.

Alternative C

No aerial chemical control of weeds would be allowed within one-quarter mile of special status species plants and associated plant communities across the planning area, in mountain mahogany habitats, in occupied pygmy rabbit habitat or occupied sage grouse breeding habitat. Occupied habitats would be determined as watershed analyses are completed and during project level analysis. [Map 13](#) depicts areas where aerial application would be prohibited.

Alternative D

Same as Alternative A.

VEGETATION – RANGELANDS

Goal – Manage the vegetative resource to maintain a diversity of ecological conditions on upland vegetation.

Desired Future Condition for Rangelands

- Sagebrush steppe includes a mosaic of multiple-aged shrubs, forbs, and native perennial grasses. Shrub overstories are present in a variety of spatial arrangements and scales across the landscape, including disjunct islands and corridors.
- A full range of sagebrush communities with diverse species and sub-species, canopy, density, and age classes are present across the landscape.
- Grass and forb plant communities occur within site potential and are stable or improving in health and vigor.
- Populations and habitats of rare plant species and their associated communities are stable or continue to improve in vigor and distribution.
- Upland vegetation provides sufficient plant cover and litter accumulation to protect soils from wind and water erosion, and enhances nutrient cycling and productivity.

Management Common to All Alternatives

The Standards for Rangeland Health would be implemented on BLM lands in southwest Montana. Assessments for land health standards would be completed on a priority watershed basis, pursuant to current BLM guidance found in H-4180-1, Rangeland Health Standards. *The Western Montana Standards for Rangeland Health* are found in [Appendix G](#). The watersheds and the priority for implementation are found on [Map 82](#). The assessments for land health standards would be completed by 2008 pending funding or other constraints.

Priority upland plant species would include aspen, curl leaf mountain mahogany, basin big sagebrush, mountain big sage

brush, basin wild rye, blue bunch wheatgrass and Idaho fescue. While these species are widespread across the planning area, they become priority where they are part of the vegetative components on priority habitats such as for big game winter range and sensitive species.

Alternative A

Under continuation of current management, management and treatment of rangeland vegetation and the various habitat types would be considered on a case-by-case basis during the watershed assessment process. Rangeland habitat types have been split into the following categories: xeric shrub, mountain shrub, fire-sprouted mountain shrub, mesic shrub, and mountain mahogany (see [Map 8, oversized](#)). Under Alternative A, site-specific units, prescriptions and tools necessary to achieve the desired resource conditions for each habitat type would be developed on a case-by-case basis.

Restoration actions for areas that have been previously seeded would also be considered on a case-by-case basis under this alternative.

Alternative B

Under Alternative B, all non-forested habitats that have conifer encroachment could be treated to restore the appropriate upland habitat type. Encroachment would be treated or harvested with prescribed and natural fire, mechanical or other tools as determined on a case-by-case basis to restore the appropriate non-forested habitat type. Consistent with forest and woodland management, treatments would focus in areas of urban interface and in the southern Ruby Mountains, the south Tobacco Roots, and in the Barton and Idaho Gulch areas, but could occur across the planning area as determined through watershed evaluations.

The xeric shrub habitat types would be managed for a fire return interval of approximately 50 years. The mountain shrub habitat types would be managed for a fire return interval of 20 to 40 years. The fire sprouted mountain shrub habitat types would be managed for a fire return interval of approximately 20 years. The mesic shrub habitat types occur in only limited amounts within the planning area and would be treated on a case-by-case basis. The mountain mahogany habitat types would be treated with fire or mechanical methods to maintain and enhance the existing habitat. As in Alternative A, site-specific units, prescriptions and tools necessary to achieve the desired resource conditions for each habitat type would be developed on a case-by-case basis during the watershed analysis.

Existing seedlings that are not meeting rangeland health standards for plant vigor and density would be improved with grazing management systems or seeded with appropriate species of natives or cultivars. Any restoration activities

would be focused on areas containing high resource values and/or priority habitats and species and would allow for use of all available tools.

Alternative C

Under Alternative C, treatment of conifer encroachment would be focused on aspen restoration areas and in the wildland-urban interface areas. Within these two areas, treatment of all non-forested habitat types could occur using prescribed fire, mechanical treatments, and other tools as appropriate. However, conifer encroachment outside of these areas would only be treated with prescribed natural fire.

Outside of aspen restoration and urban interface areas, xeric shrub, mountain shrub, and fire-sprouted mountain shrub habitat types would only be treated with natural fire to re-establish the fire return interval. Xeric shrub would be managed for a fire return interval of 50 years; mountain shrub would be managed for a fire return interval of 20 to 40 years; and fire sprouted mountain shrub would be managed for a fire return interval of approximately 20 years.

The mesic shrub habitat types occur in only limited amounts within the planning area. This habitat type would be addressed in site-specific project planning. In mountain mahogany habitat types where the Douglas fir encroachment canopy exceeds 15 percent, fire or mechanical methods would be used to maintain and enhance the existing habitat. Treatments would be focused, but not limited to, the following areas: Barton Gulch, Idaho Creek, Canyon Creek on the Big Hole, Big Sheep Creek and Hells Canyon. Site-specific units, prescriptions and tools necessary to achieve the desired resource conditions for each habitat type would be developed on a case-by-case basis during the watershed analysis.

Where the site potential allows and a diversity of native vegetation is not being recruited, areas that have been previously seeded would be restored to native plant communities under Alternative C. Restoration would be accomplished by using all available tools.

Alternative D

Under Alternative D, all non-forested habitats that have conifer encroachment could be treated to restore the appropriate upland habitat type. The encroachment would be treated or harvested with prescribed and natural fire, mechanical or other tools as determined on a case-by-case basis to restore the appropriate non-forested habitat type.

In this alternative, areas of xeric shrub habitat types that exceed a canopy density of 25 percent would be evaluated for treatment on a site-specific basis during watershed analysis and managed for a fire return interval of approximately

50 years. Up to 30,000 acres of mountain shrub habitat types, managed for a fire return interval of 20 to 40 years, would be treated over the life of the plan. Fire-sprouted mountain shrub habitat types would be managed for a fire return interval of approximately 20 years with up to 7,000 acres being treated during the life of the plan. As in other alternatives, treatment of mesic shrub habitat types would be addressed on a case-by-case basis in site-specific watershed project planning given the limited occurrence of this type in the planning area.

Mountain mahogany habitat types would be treated to maintain and enhance the existing habitat. The site-specific units, prescriptions and tools necessary to achieve the desired resource conditions for each habitat type would be developed on a case-by-case basis during the watershed analysis.

Areas that have been previously seeded would be managed to meet upland range health standards, but no proactive measures to restore seedings to native plant communities would be taken.

VEGETATION – RIPARIAN AND WETLANDS (BLM Critical Element)

Goal – Restore and maintain riparian wetland areas so that at least 955 miles of streams and 2,050 acres of wetlands are in proper functioning condition.

Desired Future Condition for Riparian and Wetlands (after 20-50 years of management)

The Western Montana Standards for Rangeland Health direct that management will achieve proper functioning conditions on all riparian and wetland habitats. This occurs when:

- Riparian and wetland vegetation supports the biological, hydrologic, and physical components of streams and wetlands based on site-specific capabilities.
- Deciduous woody and coniferous communities are present with diverse composition, density, and age structure within site potential.
- Herbaceous plant communities are dominated by deep-rooted native species that support streambank and shoreline stability, floodplain development, and nutrient cycling.
- Stream channels display the dimensions, pattern, and profile that are representative of site potential (Rosgen).

Management will emphasize maintenance of riparian communities on approximately 415 miles of stream dominated by a tall deciduous shrub or aspen/cottonwood habitat types and on approximately 500 miles of stream dominated by herbaceous and coniferous habitat types (based on 2002 in-

ventory summary). This will involve the following shifts in vegetation communities from existing conditions toward the desired future condition:

	<i>Existing</i>		<i>Desired</i>	
• Conifer types	45%	413 miles	25%	228 miles
• Aspen/cottonwood types	15%	137 miles	20%	183 miles
• Tall shrub types	30%	274 miles	40%	365 miles
• Herbaceous, misc. types	10%	91 miles	15%	137 miles

Management Common to All Alternatives

In implementation of any of the alternatives, riparian and wetland management would be consistent with all state and federal laws and regulations. Actions would be taken to cooperatively conserve riparian/wetland habitat, minimize the destruction, loss or degradation of wetlands, and preserve values served by floodplains where occurring on public land while reducing hazards to human safety.

The Western Montana Standards for Rangeland Health would be implemented to achieve proper functioning condition in riparian and wetland habitats and site-specific objectives and management strategies for riparian and wetland areas would be developed and applied through implementation of activity plans. **Map 14 (oversized)** depicts current riparian condition in the planning area.

Under all alternatives, BLM would coordinate with FWP on proposed vegetation treatments and when considering the use and management of beavers as a tool to enhance riparian habitat conditions.

Routine maintenance would be completed annually on all exclosures prior to livestock turnout. All current riparian exclosures would remain unleased for livestock grazing during the life of the plan.

Wetland habitat in the Centennial Valley would be managed under the Red Rock Waterfowl HMP to enhance habitat conditions with emphasis on maximizing opportunities to reestablish and maintain trumpeter swan occupancy.

Alternative A

Under continuation of current management, riparian and wetland habitat objectives would be developed through site-specific planning following watershed assessments and evaluation of rangeland health standards. Management would be the same as that described in Management Common to All Alternatives, with the general direction of managing riparian and wetland habitats to be in proper functioning condition.

Alternative B

Under Alternative B, management would be designed to achieve DFC or initiate an upward trend in 20 years by in-

creasing the amount of properly functioning habitat (PFC) from an existing 18 percent to 50 percent, decreasing functional-at-risk (FAR) habitat from an existing 59 percent to 30 percent, and reducing nonfunctional habitat (NF) from an existing 23 percent to 20 percent. A full array of management actions could be implemented to meet DFC, but in order to meet the proposed timeframe, actions focusing on reducing the duration of riparian impacts, such as limiting grazing treatments to less than 30 days, would be necessary.

Prevailing conditions and management are allowing some deciduous riparian communities to be dominated by conifers. Alternative B would restore approximately 100 miles of deciduous riparian habitat types that have a high composition of conifers (juniper, Douglas-fir or spruce) back to a tall deciduous shrub or aspen/cottonwood habitat type, using the following class strategy. These actions would be focused only on riparian areas retaining at least a 10-15 percent woody deciduous canopy. Multiple classes may occur on a given stream reach but no individual class should represent less than 25 percent of existing conditions for treatment purposes.

- Class 1 – Conifer canopy <10 trees/acre and <5 percent canopy, Rosgen channel types A or B – no treatment
- Class 2 – Conifer canopy 10-50 trees/acre and 5-15 percent canopy, Rosgen channel types C or E – use mechanical methods to reduce canopy to Class 1, leaving materials on-site to restrict ungulate access and enhance stream channel characteristics and stability.
- Class 3 – Conifer canopy 15-50 percent uniformly distributed throughout riparian reach, Rosgen channel types C or E – use appropriate methods to reduce conifer canopy to Class 1 while maintaining or promoting riparian proper functioning condition. However, no mechanized equipment would be allowed within the riparian zone, and no new road construction would be authorized. Up to 70 percent of material may be removed, with remainder left on-site to restrict ungulate access and enhance stream channel characteristics and stability.
- Class 4 – Spruce/Douglas-fir canopy >50 percent in distinct stands, Rosgen channel types A, B – no treatment.
- Class 5 – Juniper canopy >50 percent – reduce canopy and numbers to Class 1, using appropriate methods as in Class 3. In addition, special consideration will be given to channel stability needs and site protection from ungulate use for an extended time period.

For additional information on riparian vegetation management relative to grazing practices, fencing, and water development see the appropriate section in *Livestock Grazing*. Aspen management and rehabilitation is also discussed under *Vegetation – Forests and Woodlands*.

Alternative C

Under Alternative C, management to achieve DFC or an upward trend within ten years would be designed to increase PFC from an existing 18 percent to 60 percent, decrease FAR from an existing 59 percent to 20 percent, and reduce NF from an existing 23 percent to 20 percent. Achieving DFC within the proposed timeframe would require implementing actions that would focus on eliminating or minimizing impacts to vegetation and streambanks, or reconstructing habitats, to initiate the most rapid recovery.

Restoration of deciduous woody riparian communities with conifer overstory would be accomplished using the same strategy as described in Alternative B.

Aspen management and restoration under Alternative C would focus on Aspen/Kentucky bluegrass habitat types as a priority for treatment in both upland and riparian settings to restore a diversity of aspen age classes and structure, and native herbaceous vegetation. This habitat type has generally been altered by increased conifer competition and heavy forage utilization that has reduced aspen regeneration, and established herbaceous communities that are dominated by Kentucky bluegrass, an undesirable, increasing species. Restoration treatments to reduce conifer canopy and stimulate regeneration would be large scale and sufficiently widespread to avoid concentrated use by wild ungulates. Aspen restoration treatments of 100 acres or less would be excluded from ungulate grazing until aspen regeneration is a minimum of 5 feet tall on average. See *Livestock Grazing* and *Forests and Woodlands Vegetation* sections for additional aspen treatment information.

For additional information on riparian vegetation management relative to grazing practices, fencing, and water development see the appropriate section in *Livestock Grazing*.

Alternative D

DFC would not be achieved by this alternative during the life of the plan. Management under Alternative D would achieve DFC or initiate an upward trend on all riparian habitats within a timeframe extending beyond the life of the current planning effort, perhaps as long as 50 years. Changes in functional conditions would increase PFC from an existing 18 percent to 80 percent, decrease FAR from an existing 59 percent to 20 percent, and reduce NF. A wider array of management actions with slower response time could be implemented to reduce impacts to plant communities and streambanks, such as avoiding more than one hot-season grazing treatment every three years.

Riparian restoration projects under Alternative D would be applied only to aspen communities where conifer competition is reducing aspen. Otherwise, succession would be al-

lowed to proceed to coniferous types within site potential in riparian communities.

VISUAL RESOURCES

Management of Potential ACECs containing relevant and important scenic values (Centennial Mountains and Muddy Creek/Big Sheep Creek) is described in the ACEC section.

Goal – Manage scenic values in accordance with the objectives established for VRM classes.

Management Common to All Alternatives

Under all alternatives, visual resources would be managed according to established guidelines for VRM classes as described in Chapter 3, *Affected Environment*. Generally, VRM Class I is more protective of scenic values and VRM Class IV is less restrictive. The visual resource contrast rating system would be used during project level planning to determine whether or not proposed activities will meet VRM objectives. Mitigation measures would then be identified to reduce visual contrasts, and rehabilitation plans to address landscape modifications would be prepared on a case-by-case basis. The Bear Trap Wilderness and all Wilderness Study Areas would be managed under VRM Class I. If released, visual resources in each respective WSA would be managed as specified in **Appendix M**.

Alternative A

Under the continuation of current management, visual resources in the planning area would be managed under the following classes:

Approximately 129,163 acres, including all wilderness and wilderness study areas would be managed as VRM Class I.

Approximately 34,392 acres would be managed as VRM Class II.

Approximately 218,442 acres would be managed as VRM Class III.

Approximately 519,045 acres would be managed as VRM Class IV.

Over half of the BLM lands in the planning area would be managed under VRM Class IV. **Map 15** shows the distribution of these classes across the planning area.

Alternative B

Under Alternative B, the majority of lands in the planning area would be managed under VRM Class III, with over

500,000 more acres managed under VRM Class III compared to Alternative A. Lands within the planning area would be placed in the classes as described below.

Approximately 128,269 acres, including all wilderness and wilderness study areas, would be managed as VRM Class I, except the Tobacco Root Tack-On which would be released from further consideration and managed under VRM Class III. The Ruby Mountains WSA would be managed as Class II.

Approximately 30,810 acres, including lands around the Axolotl Lakes area and lands within the Virginia City Historic Landmark boundary would be managed as VRM Class II.

Approximately 723,585 acres would be managed as VRM Class III, encompassing most of the planning area. This includes an addition of approximately 5,000 acres adjacent to the southwest portion of the Ruby Mountains WSA previously managed as Class. The Barrett Treasure Mine currently operates in the area making it unsuitable for a Class II classification. This area also has a high probability of future mineral development making it better managed under Class III.

Approximately 18,412 acres would be managed as VRM Class IV, including the following areas with past or present mining operations:

- active Placer Operations located east of Bannack State Park
- Ermont Mining District
- Rochester Mining District
- Silver Star Mining District
- Revenue Mining District

Map 16 depicts the location of these classes across the planning area.

Alternative C

Alternative C would manage visual resources as in Alternative B, with one exception. The area one (1) mile on either side of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail along the trail segment in Horse Prairie from the city of Grant to Lemhi Pass would be managed as VRM Class II instead of VRM Class III. This would increase the acreage of Class II lands to approximately 42,370 acres and decrease the acreage of Class III lands to approximately 711,969 acres.

Map 17 depicts the location of these classes across the planning area.

Alternative D

Under this alternative, lands managed under VRM Class IV would increase in comparison to B and C, but would still be less than Alternative A, while VRM Class II and III would decrease slightly.

Approximately 128,269 acres would be managed as VRM Class I, including all wilderness and wilderness study areas.

Approximately 30,397 acres would be managed as VRM Class II

Approximately 697,669 acres would be managed as VRM Class III, including lands near Axolotl Lakes (which are managed as Class II in Alternatives B and C).

Approximately 44,752 acres would be managed as VRM Class IV, with all the same areas as identified in Alternative B but also including lands surrounding the Virginia City Landmark and lands in the Alder Gulch area to allow for major landscape modification from potential vegetation treatments.

Map 18 depicts the location of these classes across the planning area.

WATER (including BLM Critical Element Water Quality, Drinking/Ground)

Goal – Restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the waters in the Dillon FO to protect beneficial uses.

Desired Future Condition

All water sources provide water quality and quantity sufficient to meet Montana State standards and to protect or restore beneficial uses. Stream channels display the dimensions, pattern and profile that are representative of site potential to allow floodplain aquifer recharge, moderate stream flows and buffer the effects of flooding.

Management Common to All Alternatives

Management under all alternatives would seek to prevent water quality degradation, and improve watershed function throughout the planning area. The *Western Montana Standards for Rangeland Health* would be implemented to ensure water quality meets State standards and beneficial uses are protected or restored. Best Management Practices (BMPs) would be used to prevent non point source water pollution and mitigation measures would be applied on a

case-by-case basis when implementing projects. Permits pertaining to projects affecting water quality, wetlands, and/or streams would be obtained prior to implementing BLM projects, and outside applicants would be required to provide copies of pertinent permits prior to BLM authorization.

BLM would continue to coordinate and cooperate with MT DEQ and communities in the development of Water Quality Restoration Plans (WQRPs) and Source Water Protection Plans.

WILD HORSES AND BURROS

Goal – Promote the wild horse and burro adoption program.

Management Common to All Alternatives

The planning area does not contain any horses or burros or Herd Management Areas. The DFO would support the wild horse and burro program with public education information about adoption opportunities. Inspections would be conducted within the vicinity of the planning area as requested to meet pre-adoption and titling requirements, and staff would assist with adoptions within the region.

RESOURCE USES

FOREST PRODUCTS

Goal – Provide opportunities for traditional and non-traditional uses of forest products by incorporating sound ecological principles while contributing to the economic stability of the community.

Management Common to All Alternatives

The BLM would do the following across all alternatives:

- Coordinate with appropriate entities pertaining to forest health and/or other administrative concerns.
- Conduct inventory of remaining forest lands that have not been inventoried.
- Analyze the salvage of forest products resulting from wildfire, prescribed fire, forest insect/disease, or weather induced events.
- Conduct salvage in a manner commensurate with forest health guidance and in consideration of other resource values.
- Consider removal of suitable biomass (non-commercial size products) on a case-by-case basis.

- Provide the opportunity for both traditional and non-traditional use of forests and woodlands. Stewardship opportunities would be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Alternative A

This alternative would be a continuation of the existing forestry practices as outlined in the 1979 Management Framework Plan (MFP) as well as the Pioneer and Gravelly Landscape Analyses. Geographic restrictions from forest management that were applicable from the MFP would still apply with approximately 82,000 acres available in the commercial forest base acres. If historic levels of multiple use restrictions continue, approximately 1.6 million board feet per year of forest products would be provided. The types of stand prescriptions and locations where these would be applied are addressed in the Forest and Woodlands section.

To maintain maximum growth rates, pre-commercial thinning operations in young conifer stands (primarily in but not limited to lodgepole pine) would be desired. However, where needed this would be modified as required in the Lynx Conservation Assessment & Strategy guidance.

Regeneration would primarily be by natural means in lodgepole pine stands unless the seed source is lost by unanticipated complications in harvest operations or intense long duration wildfire that could potentially consume the seed source. Where natural regeneration is lacking in other conifer types such as Douglas-fir, planting would be implemented in accordance with bureau policy. Regeneration would be monitored for stand re-establishment and protected if needed from livestock grazing.

Timber salvage operations would be considered on a case-by-case basis. Small sale opportunities to the general public would be provided on a case-by-case basis.

Alternative B

Under this alternative up to 35,000 acres of forest and woodland treatments would occur over the life of the plan. The Probable Sale Quantity (PSQ) under this alternative would be estimated at 3.6 million board feet of wood products per year from three geographic areas: the southern Ruby Mountains; south Tobacco Root Mountains; and the Barton/Alder Gulch area. A PSQ is *not* a commitment to cut a specific level of volume every year, but is an estimate of the allowable harvest level that could be maintained if a schedule is followed without full consideration of all environmental factors at this level of planning. Prescriptions would be as described in the Forest and Woodlands Section.

An additional 3.0 million board feet of conifer wood products would be cut and potentially removed from in and around aspen stands (12,000 acres) until the stands are re-

stored. Maintenance of the aspen stands in out years to remove re-invading conifers would undergo analysis in future planning documents. Long-term conifer management would continue on 23,000 acres (an estimated 42 percent of all conifer forest and woodlands in the planning area). Conifer regeneration would be managed as described in Alternative A.

Commercial thinning in Cool Moist habitat types in the south Tobacco Roots, south Ruby Mountains and Barton/Idaho Gulch areas would be in accordance with the Lynx Conservation Strategy.

Under this alternative, timber salvage operations would be considered on a case-by-case basis in all areas where it is not prohibited. Where insect infestations such as spruce budworm have the potential to go from endemic to epidemic proportions, sanitation cutting would be implemented. Sales of small quantities of forest products would be provided but especially encouraged in the same geographic areas as commercial sales. However, timing of these opportunities would have to be such that contractor/public user conflicts are kept to a minimum.

Alternative C

Under this alternative up to 19,000 acres of forests and woodlands would be treated during the life of the plan, with a Probable Sale Quantity (PSQ) of 0.7 million board feet of wood products per year. Aspen would be managed the same as described in Alternative B. Long-term conifer management would continue on 12,000 acres (an estimated 23 percent of all conifer forest and woodlands in the planning area). Conifer regeneration would be managed as described in Alternative A.

There would be no proactive forest management in the Cool Moist habitat types anywhere in the planning area. Management for whitebark pine would not be considered in this alternative. Utilization of commercial wood products would be allowed but not emphasized in this alternative, while aspen restoration and salvage harvest would be the same as Alternative B.

Salvage harvest treatments would be considered in all habitat types where they occur and treated the same as Alternative B. Sales of small quantities of forest products would be provided but especially emphasized in the wildland/urban interface areas.

The majority of the conifer treatments would be confined to the Warm and Dry to Warm and Very Dry habitat types (including woodlands) in Condition Class 3 with the location of these treatments emphasized in wildland urban interface areas. The management prescriptions are described in the *Forest and Woodlands* section. Use of prescribed fire would be the same as Alternative B.

Alternative D

Under this alternative up to 51,000 acres of forests and woodlands would be treated during the life of the plan, with a Probable Sale Quantity (PSQ) of 5.9 million board feet of wood products per year. An additional 3.7 million board feet of conifer wood products would be cut and potentially removed from in and around approximately 14,000 acres of aspen stands until the stands are restored. Maintenance of the aspen stands in out years to remove re-invading conifers would undergo analysis in future planning documents. Long-term conifer management would continue on 37,000 acres (an estimated 61 percent of all conifer forest and woodlands in the planning area). Conifer regeneration would be managed as described in Alternative A.

All habitat types would be eligible for treatment in this alternative. The tools for accomplishing these treatments would be similar to or identical to those described in Alternative B. Treatment of stands in Condition Class 3 as well as those stands approaching this condition would be emphasized. Aspen restoration would be accomplished on up to 14,000 acres. The area targeted for aspen restoration is larger under this alternative because treatments would be expanded to include smaller remnant patches or clones throughout the field office.

Whitebark pine restoration would be the most expansive under this alternative. The tools for accomplishing these treatments would be similar to or identical to those described in Alternative B.

Salvage harvest would be the same as Alternative B. Utilization of wood products would be the most emphasized in this alternative. Small sale opportunities would be the same as Alternative A.

LANDS AND REALTY

Land Use Authorizations

Goal 1 – Meet public needs for use authorizations such as rights-of-way, leases, and permits while minimizing adverse impacts to other resource values.

Land use authorizations include various authorizations and agreements to use BLM lands such as right-of-way grants, road use agreements and associated temporary use permits under several different authorities; leases, permits, and easements under section 302 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA); airport leases under the Act of May 24, 1928; and Recreation and Public Purposes (R&PP) leases. R&PP transfers are handled below under the *Land Ownership Adjustment* section.

Management Common to All Alternatives

Requests for land use authorizations would be analyzed and mitigation measures applied on a case-by-case basis in compliance with the NEPA process. Interim management policy and guidelines for land use authorizations in WSAs would be followed as appropriate. In accordance with current policy, land use authorizations would not be issued for uses which would involve the disposal or storage of materials which could contaminate the land (hazardous waste disposal sites, landfills, rifle ranges, etc.). Rights-of-way, leases, permits, or easements would not be required for those activities that are considered casual use of public lands.

New right-of-way facilities would be located within or adjacent to existing rights-of-way, to the extent practical, in order to minimize adverse environmental impacts and the proliferation of separate rights-of-way. In particular, new communication site users would be grouped into suitable existing sites to reduce impacts and expedite application processing. Site plans would be completed prior to authorizing communication site uses in new areas. The use of alternative energy sources would be considered where electric power is not available. **Map 19** shows currently authorized communication sites.

When feasible, electric distribution lines would be required to be buried on public lands when located within one-quarter mile each side of the Madison River in order to preserve scenic quality.

The latest version of *Suggested Practices for Raptor Protection on Power Lines* (APLIC 1996) and USFWS Interim Guidance to Avoid and Minimize Wildlife Impacts from Wind Turbines” (USDI-FWS 2003) would be implemented in the construction and operation of right-of-way facilities.

Owners of non-Federal land surrounded by public land managed under FLPMA would be allowed a degree of access across public land which would provide for the reasonable use and enjoyment of the non-Federal land. The use of certain rights-of-way constructed on public lands prior to FLPMA would be recognized as a valid use even though the authorities authorizing the use have since been repealed (i.e., ditches and canals under the Act of July 26, 1866; highways, roads, and trails under R.S. 2477, etc.). However, no regulations currently exist to either assert or recognize R.S. 2477 rights-of-way.

Realty-related unauthorized use would be abated through prevention, detection, and resolution of such uses. Upon settlement of trespass liabilities, resolution of the unauthorized use of public lands would be accomplished through termination, authorization, or sale or exchange, as appropriate. BLM lands affected by unauthorized uses would be rehabilitated as determined necessary.

Alternative A

Under current management, no specific right-of-way use areas for communication sites would be designated, nor would any right-of-way corridors be designated. No right-of-way avoidance or exclusion areas would be designated. Other than general compatibility requirements, there would be no requirement for new facilities located within existing communication sites to conform with the existing designated uses identified on **Table 28** in Chapter 3.

Alternative B

Under Alternative B, five (5) right-of-way use areas for communication sites would be designated including Armstead Mountain, Maurer Mountain, Pipe Organ, Bear Trap, and Virginia City Hill. Applicants for communication site facilities would be encouraged to locate within these designated use areas. Site plans would be developed for each of the above-listed designated communication site use areas and updated periodically as necessary. Boundaries of the use areas would also be defined by these site plans. Any new facilities to be located within these designated right-of-way use areas or other communication sites would be required to conform with the existing designated uses identified on **Table 28** in Chapter 3.

Two of the existing right-of-way corridors delineated in the 1992 “Western Regional Corridor Study” would be designated as right-of-way corridors where they cross public lands. These corridors are each currently occupied by an electrical transmission line. Nominal corridor width would be 1,320 feet (1/4 mile) on each side of centerline of the existing facilities, except where the alignment forms the boundary of a Special Management Area, where the width would be 2,640 feet (1/2 mile) on the side opposite that boundary. Applicants for electrical transmission lines 69 kV and larger and pipelines 10 inches in diameter and greater would be encouraged to locate such facilities within these two designated corridors.

Access to and along right-of-way corridors and use areas necessary to maintain existing facilities and construct new facilities would be provided across public lands.

Other uses of right-of-way corridors and use areas would be permitted to the extent that they did not interfere with or preclude the use of these locations for their intended purpose and were consistent with other portions of the plan.

Under this alternative, the Bear Trap Unit of the Lee Metcalf Wilderness would be designated a right-of-way exclusion area. No new rights-of-way would be granted in this area. However, any valid existing rights-of-way would be recognized and holders of such authorizations would be allowed to maintain their facilities.

All existing Wilderness Study Areas (except the Tobacco Root Tack-on) and the Lewis and Clark Trail would be designated as right-of-way avoidance areas where the issuance of new rights-of-way would be avoided unless there are no other options. Valid existing rights-of-way in right-of-way avoidance areas would be recognized and holders of such authorizations would be allowed to maintain their facilities.

With proper NEPA compliance, the upgrading/expansion of existing rights-of-way and issuance of new rights-of-way would be allowed within existing corridors crossing designated right-of-way avoidance areas. (Note: The designated right-of-way corridors mentioned above do not cross any WSAs). Roads crossing right-of-way avoidance areas that provide access to or along right-of-way corridors for the purposes of construction or maintenance of facilities within those corridors would be allowed on a case-by-case basis.

Map 20 illustrates right-of-way corridors, use areas, avoidance and exclusion areas for Alternative B.

Alternative C

Management under this alternative would be the same as Alternative B, except that the following additional areas would be designated as right-of-way avoidance areas: Blue Lake; Centennial Mountains; Everson Creek; and the Virginia City Historic District. Beaverhead Rock would be added as a right-of-way exclusion area. **Map 21** depicts right-of-way corridors, use areas, avoidance and exclusion areas for Alternative C.

Alternative D

Management would be the same as Alternative B, except that in addition, FLPMA right-of-way reservations would be processed on all BLM developed recreation sites not currently withdrawn from mineral entry. In addition, the Lewis & Clark Trail would not be designated as a right-of-way avoidance area. **Map 22** illustrates right-of-way corridors, use areas, avoidance and exclusion areas for Alternative D.

Table 4 summarizes the number of acres included in ROW avoidance or exclusion areas by alternative.

Table 4 Acres of Avoidance and Exclusion Areas for Rights-of-Way by Alternative				
	<i>Alternative</i>			
	<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>D</i>
Avoidance	0	123,286	145,657	122,851
Exclusion	0	6,347	6,467	6,347

Land Ownership Adjustment

Section 102(a)(1) of FLPMA provides that "...the public lands be retained in Federal ownership, unless as a result of the land use planning procedure provided for in this Act, it is determined that disposal of a particular tract will serve the national interest...".

Goal 2 – Retain public lands with high resource values in public ownership. Adjust land ownership to consolidate public land holdings, acquire lands with high public resource values, and meet public and community needs.

Management Common to All Alternatives

Public lands with high resource values would generally be retained in federal ownership. All proposed land ownership adjustment actions would be analyzed in project specific environmental reviews. Public access would be maintained or improved through all land ownership adjustment transactions.

Direct purchase would be limited to cases where no practical alternatives exist and high public values would be acquired.

Newly acquired lands would be managed for the highest potential purpose for which they were acquired. Lands acquired within special management areas with specific Congressional mandates (such as National Trails and Wilderness Areas) would be managed in conformance with established guidelines for those areas. Lands acquired within administratively designated special management areas such as ACECs and SRMAs that contain unique or fragile resources would be managed the same as the special management area. Lands acquired without special values or management goals would be managed in the same manner as comparable surrounding public lands. Lands and interests in lands obtained with LWCF appropriations would not be available for disposal by any means.

If over the life of the plan land status updates identify additional parcels administered by BLM, those lands would be managed in the same manner as parcels adjacent to or in the vicinity of them in regard to retention or disposal.

The need to protect newly acquired lands would be considered as part of the analysis prior to acquisition. If withdrawn, acquired lands would be managed under the terms and conditions of the withdrawal.

Federal minerals underlying non-Federal surface would generally be retained in federal ownership. However, an exchange of this type of mineral estate may be considered on a case-by-case basis if found to be in the public interest.

The sale of this type of mineral interest under section 209(b) of FLPMA could be considered only if the requirements of this same section were met.

Additional information pertaining to the land adjustment program can be found in **Appendix F**.

Alternative A

Under current management land ownership adjustments are considered on a case-by-case basis, based primarily on criteria and adjustment zones established in the 1984 Land Pattern Review and Land Adjustment Supplement to the 1983 State Director Guidance. This alternative would maintain the two adjustment zones established by this guidance—Retention and Lands Outside of Retention. Land exchange would be the preferred means of land acquisition and disposal. **Map 23** illustrates the location of these two zones within the planning area.

Under Alternative A, approximately 811,000 acres lie within the Retention Zone. Lands within the Retention zone would in general be retained, although disposal of tracts to realize greater management efficiency, to gain public values, or to serve important public purposes could be considered.

Approximately 91,000 acres would be managed as Lands Outside of the Retention Zone. These lands would be available for the full array of land adjustment opportunities including retention, exchange, sale, or transfer.

Transfer of public land under the Recreation and Public Purposes (R&PP) Act and grants of public land for airport purposes under the Airport and Airway Improvement Act would be considered across the planning area on a case-by-case basis. Public land in the planning area would also be available for state grants, agricultural entries, and Indian allotments on a case-by-case basis. Under this alternative, particular tracts of state and privately held lands have been identified for acquisition to enhance and protect certain resource values (see **Appendix F**). Any acquisition would be on a willing seller/owner basis. However, in instances where a landowner was unwilling to allow the acquisition of lands necessary to secure access to public lands, the exercise of the right of eminent domain could be considered as an option of last resort.

Alternative B

Management of land ownership adjustments would be based on three categories of public lands as depicted on **Map 24** and described below. Under Alternative B, no public lands in the planning area would be made available for disposal under agricultural entries, Indian allotments, or state selections. As in Alternative A, any acquisition would be on a willing seller/owner basis. However, in instances where a

landowner was unwilling to allow the acquisition of lands necessary to secure access to public lands, the exercise of the right of eminent domain could be considered as an option of last resort.

For land ownership adjustment purposes, newly acquired lands obtained with LWCF funding and lands acquired within or adjacent to special management areas would be designated as Category 1 lands and managed accordingly. All other newly acquired lands would be designated and managed as Category 2 lands.

Category 1 (RETENTION)

Public lands in Category 1 would be identified for retention and include lands with high resource values. These lands tend to be fairly well blocked in terms of land pattern. Included in this category are areas such as Congressionally designated wilderness, WSAs, certain developed and dispersed recreation areas, lands acquired using LWCF monies, and certain wildlife sites with substantial capital investment. Public lands in Category 1 would not be transferred from BLM management by any method during the life of the plan. Acquisition of lands or interests in lands would receive priority if located in or adjacent to public lands in Category 1 providing they meet one or more of the acquisition criteria found in **Appendix F**.

Approximately 142,000 acres would be managed as Category 1 lands under this alternative.

Category 2 (RETENTION/LIMITED LAND OWNERSHIP ADJUSTMENT)

Public lands in Category 2 would generally be identified for retention in public ownership. Category 2 includes both larger tracts of BLM lands that are fairly well blocked as well as some smaller, isolated parcels. Limited disposal actions involving public lands within this category could occur.

Public lands within Category 2 would not be available for sale under section 203 of FLPMA. However, public lands within this category could be exchanged for lands or interests in lands located anywhere within the State of Montana. Parcels of public land within Category 2 identified by state, local, or other qualifying entities for recreation or public purpose needs could be considered for transfer under the R&PP Act on a case-by-case basis. Grants of public lands to public agencies for airport purposes under the Airport and Airway Improvement Act could also be considered on a case-by-case basis. In addition, public lands within Category 2 could be considered for public agency jurisdictional transfer.

Some public lands in Category 2 may contain significant resource values protected by law or policy. If actions cannot be taken to adequately mitigate impacts from disposal of those lands, those parcels would be retained. Acquisition

of lands or interests in lands located in or adjacent to Category 2 would be considered in accordance with the Acquisition Criteria found in **Appendix F**.

Approximately 756,000 acres would be managed as Category 2 lands under this alternative.

Category 3 (DISPOSAL)

Public lands in Category 3 would be identified for disposal. These lands generally have low or unknown resource values or are isolated or fragmented from other public land ownerships making them difficult to manage. Public land parcels in this category are relatively smaller in size – typically 160 acres or less. A listing of the legal descriptions of these disposal parcels can be found in **Appendix F**.

Public lands in Category 3 would be available for disposal through exchange for lands or interests in lands located anywhere within the Dillon Field Office as well as elsewhere in Montana. These parcels also have been found to potentially meet the sale criteria of section 203(a)(1) of FLPMA and could be made available for sale. However, disposal of Category 3 lands by exchange would have priority over disposal by FLPMA sale. Parcels of public land within Category 3 identified by state, local or other qualifying entities for recreation or public purpose needs could be considered for transfer under the R&PP Act on a case-by-case basis. Grants of public lands to public agencies for airport purposes under the Airport and Airway Improvement Act could also be considered on a case-by-case basis. Additionally, public lands within Category 3 could be considered for disposal by public agency jurisdictional transfer.

Some public lands in Category 3 may contain significant resource values protected by law or policy. If actions cannot be taken to adequately mitigate impacts from disposal of those lands, those parcels would be retained.

Approximately 4,000 acres would be managed as Category 3 lands under this alternative.

Alternative C

Alternative C would be the same as Alternative B, except that there would be no Category 3 lands and the exercise of the right of eminent domain for securing access to public lands would not be considered. The Category 3 lands in Alternative B would be included in Category 2. The management of Categories 1 and 2 in this alternative would be the same as the management of Categories 1 and 2 in Alternative B. A total of approximately 142,000 acres would be managed as Category 1 lands, while a total of approximately 760,000 acres would be managed as Category 2 lands for land ownership adjustment purposes. There would be no FLPMA section 203 sales under this alternative, and no public lands in the planning area would be made available for disposal under agricultural entries, Indian allotments, or

state selections. **Map 24** depicts the location of the public lands by category for Alternative C.

Alternative D

Same as Alternative B, except that the exercise of the right of eminent domain for securing access to public land would not be considered.

Access

Goal 3 – Acquire and maintain access to public lands where needed to improve management efficiency and facilitate multiple use and the public’s enjoyment of these lands in coordination with other federal agencies, state and local governments, and private landowners.

Management Common to All Alternatives

Legal public or administrative access over non-Federal lands to reach public lands lacking adequate access would be acquired from willing landowners using all methods available. These include methods such as easements acquired through purchase, exchange, or donation; land exchanges; fee title purchases or donations; or long-term land use agreements. Easement acquisition would be the predominant method of obtaining legal access. In conveyance documents associated with land ownership adjustments, existing access would be maintained using appropriate covenant language.

Alternative A

Legal public or administrative access would be obtained from willing landowners on a case-by-case basis as the need or opportunity arises using criteria and direction contained in the State Director Guidance on Access (USDI-BLM 1989). In accordance with this guidance, access efforts would be centered on areas within public land retention zones as established in the 1984 State Director planning guidance pertaining to land adjustment. **Map 23** depicts these land retention zones. Access acquisition efforts would also be concentrated on areas with important resource values, larger blocks of public land, areas with high public demand for access, and in areas with substantial BLM improvements. Easement acquisition would be focused in areas with completed route analyses.

In instances where landowners were unwilling to grant access, the exercise of the right of eminent domain for access purposes could be considered as an option of last resort under this alternative.

Alternative B

Legal public or administrative access would be obtained from willing landowners on a case-by-case basis as the need

or opportunity arises. Acquisition efforts would be focused on those routes designated as “open” in the travel plan that lack legal public access. Acquiring access to BLM lands identified for permanent retention in Category 1 would have a higher priority than acquiring access to BLM lands in Category 2 (see Alternative B of the “Land Ownership Adjustment” section for additional description of these land ownership adjustment categories).

In instances where landowners were unwilling to grant access, the exercise of the right of eminent domain for access purposes could be considered as an option of last resort under this alternative.

Alternatives C and D

Management procedures would be the same as Alternative B under Alternatives C and D except that the exercise of the right of eminent domain for access purposes would not be considered. The number of areas or routes requiring access would vary across the alternatives based on the number of routes that lack legal public access that are designated as part of the RMP travel management alternatives.

Withdrawals

Goal 4 – Utilize withdrawal actions with the least restrictive measures and minimum size necessary to accomplish the required purposes.

Management Common to All Alternatives

Existing withdrawals would be reviewed on a case-by-case basis prior to the end of the withdrawal period or as otherwise required by law to determine whether the withdrawals should be extended, revoked, or modified. Withdrawals no longer needed, in whole or in part, for the purpose for which they were withdrawn would be revoked or modified. Other agency requests for withdrawal relinquishments, extensions or modifications would be considered on a case-by-case basis. New withdrawal proposals would be considered on a case-by-case basis where the public land would transfer from one federal agency to another or where resource values or agency investments are best protected by withdrawal. Lands proposed to be withdrawn should be the minimum area required for the intended use and where applicable alternative prescriptions such as the use of rights-of-way, leases, permits, or cooperative agreements are inadequate to protect the resource values.

Land classifications, as “de facto” withdrawals, would also be reviewed on a case-by-case basis to determine if they should be continued or terminated. In particular, current BLM policy is to terminate remaining existing Classification and Multiple Use Act (C&MU) retention classifications. In accordance with this policy, the one remaining C&MU

classification in the planning area involving a five-acre site at Road Agent’s Rock in Section 29, T7S, R11W, PMM, would be terminated.

Alternative A

An estimated 12,300 acres proposed for withdrawal from operation of the mining law would be reviewed and processed (see *Minerals* section). Management of other existing withdrawals and newly proposed withdrawals would be conducted as described under Management Common to All Alternatives.

Alternative B

Same as Alternative A, except an estimated 2,305 acres would be reviewed and processed.

Alternative C

Same as Alternative A, except an estimated 25,992 acres would be reviewed and processed.

Alternative D

Same as Alternative A, except an estimated 70 acres would be reviewed and processed.

LIVESTOCK GRAZING

Goal – Manage the public rangelands to provide for a sustainable level of livestock grazing consistent with multiple use and sustained yield.

Management Common to All Alternatives

Livestock grazing would be managed through Implementation of Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing which would be incorporated into livestock grazing permits. Existing Allotment Management Plans (AMPs) would continue to be implemented, including the associated range improvement projects. New AMPs would be developed and implemented to direct site-specific management of livestock after completion of rangeland health assessments that are conducted on a watershed basis. [Map 82](#) identifies the priority watersheds and assessment schedule.

Guidelines for Livestock Grazing would be used in concert with Best Management Practices (MT DNRC 1999) when authorizing grazing along with site specific vegetation objectives tiered to overall vegetative desired future conditions. Use supervision of authorized grazing would be conducted within staffing capabilities. Management of jointly

managed FS-BLM allotments would continue as provided for under the Beaverhead-Deerlodge NF and Butte District BLM MOU for cooperative management.

Alternative A

Under continuation of current management, livestock grazing would be allowed on up to 854,757 acres of public land. Approximately 46,469 acres of public land would not be available for livestock grazing. Unavailable lands include unallotted areas. [Map 25](#) shows the general location of public land available and unavailable for livestock grazing.

No term grazing permits or leases would be authorized in unallotted areas. Applications for unleased allotments would be considered on a case-by-case basis. Grazing uses on acquired lands will be considered on a case-by-case basis based on the values identified for the acquisition. The Cross and Exchange allotments would remain as Resource Reserve allotments.

Livestock utilization of key forage species would continue to be set on a case-by-case basis during the watershed evaluation and assessment analysis process and the development of individual allotment management plans. The most common key forage species for southwest Montana are: blue bunch wheatgrass, Idaho fescue, basin wildrye, needle-and-thread, and western wheatgrass.

Any necessary adjustments to livestock grazing would be developed as a result of watershed evaluations, Standards for Rangeland Health assessments, and subsequent allotment management plans. Adjustments to allotments could be made for fish habitat enhancement, sensitive plants and their habitats or to meet the Standards for Rangeland Health. Any adjustments to livestock numbers, including increases or decreases, would also be made following watershed evaluations, Standards for Rangeland Health assessments, and interdisciplinary review.

Vegetation treatment areas, such as conifer encroachment, would be rested from livestock grazing up to one year prior to treatment if necessary to maintain fine fuels for burning and for a minimum of two growing seasons following treatment to promote recovery of vegetation. Livestock rest for less than two growing seasons could be justified on a case-by-case basis.

Objectives contained in the Red Rock Habitat Management Plan would be applied to grazing allotments in that area.

Alternative B

Under Alternative B, livestock grazing would be allowed on up to 852,778 acres of public land. Approximately 48,448

acres of public land would not be available for livestock grazing. Lands that are not available include the same unallotted lands as described in Alternative A, but would also include Blue Lake and Eli Springs area (see [Map 25](#)). No term grazing permits or leases would be issued for these areas. These areas could be grazed with livestock on a temporary nonrenewable basis to meet resource objectives of the area.

Allotments that are currently unleased/unpermitted would be evaluated during the watershed analysis process. Allotments that are meeting the standards for rangeland health, are manageable as distinct grazing units, and are in a location where a resource reserve allotment is needed would be designated as Resource Reserve allotments. If the allotment meets the standards for rangeland health but is not manageable as a distinct grazing unit or is not in a location where a resource reserve allotment is needed, the allotment would be re-allocated in accordance with the grazing regulations (43 CFR 4130.1-2) or classified as unavailable for livestock grazing. Allotments for which permits or leases have been relinquished or cancelled would be evaluated in the same manner as unleased/unpermitted allotments. Newly acquired lands would be evaluated in the same manner as unleased/unpermitted allotments so long as any grazing use authorized is compatible with the values for which the lands were acquired. Areas that do not meet the standards for rangeland health would be dealt with as outlined in the Rangeland Health Standards Handbook (H-4180).

Utilization levels would be set in the same manner as described in Alternative A, as would adjustments to livestock grazing. Grazing would be managed to protect concentrated westslope cutthroat trout spawning areas in streams containing 99 percent and above genetically pure populations. Actions would also be taken to protect and enhance BLM sensitive plant species when Standards for Rangeland Health are not being met, or where plant monitoring shows special status plants are being impacted from livestock use.

Vegetation treatment areas, such as conifer encroachment, would be rested from livestock grazing up to one year prior to treatment if necessary to maintain fine fuels for burning and for a minimum of two growing seasons following treatment to promote recovery of vegetation. Livestock rest for less than two growing seasons could be justified on a case-by-case basis. Small and isolated aspen restoration treatments would be designed to reduce or eliminate browsing impacts until the aspen regeneration has reached a minimum of five feet tall on average.

Grazing would be managed to provide a minimum of 12-inch residual tall emergent wetland vegetation within wetland and waterfowl production areas in the Centennial Valley.

Cattle would be maintained as the primary class of livestock on mountain mahogany habitat. Sheep grazing on mountain mahogany habitat would be mitigated through site-specific management treatments, changed to cattle use, or eliminated where monitoring data indicates it is necessary.

No new or converted domestic sheep permits would be authorized in wildlife dispersal/migration corridors, but existing permits could be transferred. This would not preclude the use of sheep as a resource management tool authorized on a case-by-case basis (for example, grazing sheep to help control weeds).

Alternative C

Livestock grazing would be allowed on up to 835,115 acres of public land under this alternative. Approximately 66,111 acres of public land would not be available for livestock grazing. [Map 26](#) shows these general locations.

No term grazing permits or leases would be authorized in unallotted areas, currently unleased allotments, Blue Lake, Eli Springs and the Centennial Valley wetlands/waterfowl production areas. Acquired lands would not have term permits or leases issued. These areas could be grazed with livestock on a temporary nonrenewable basis to meet resource objectives throughout the planning area.

Under this alternative, livestock utilization of key forage species would be limited to 35 percent of current years growth on all allotments. The most common key forage species for southwest Montana are: blue bunch wheatgrass, Idaho fescue, basin wildrye, needle-and-thread, and western wheatgrass. Elk winter range within grazing areas would have 30 percent of the area rested on a rotational basis.

Livestock grazing in areas with sensitive plant species that are susceptible to herbivory would be managed to provide year long rest or deferment two years out of three (see [Map 7](#)). Genera currently on the BLM sensitive plant list that are susceptible to herbivory include: *Astragalus*, *Carex*, *Elymus*, *Penstemon*, and *Taraxacum*. The affected species could change as the BLM sensitive plant species list is updated. Livestock grazing would also be managed, either through implementation of projects or grazing use adjustments to prevent impacts to WCT spawning and fry emergence between April 15 and August 1.

Vegetation management treatment areas would be rested from livestock grazing up to one year prior to treatment if needed to maintain fuels for burning and for two years post treatment to promote recovery followed by three years growing season deferment. Small and isolated aspen restoration treatments would be designed to reduce or eliminate browsing impacts until the aspen regeneration has reached a minimum of five feet tall on average.

Cattle would be maintained as the only class of livestock on mountain mahogany habitat unless those areas can be retired from and closed to grazing. Areas containing suitable grizzly bear and wolf habitat in the Centennial Mountains, Snowcrest Mountains, Gravelly Range, Greenhorn Mountains, Axolotl Lakes, and along the Continental Divide from Monida to Lemhi Pass would have no new, transferred or converted domestic sheep permits under this alternative.

Alternative D

Alternative D would continue management as described in Alternative A with the exception of availability allocations, grazing management on aspen restoration treatments, grazing on mountain mahogany habitats, and management of acquisition lands. Available and unavailable lands would be allocated as described in Alternative B, and management of grazing in relation to aspen restoration treatments, mountain mahogany habitats, and acquisition lands would also be in accordance with provisions in Alternative B.

MINERALS – LEASABLE MINERALS

Goal 1 – Advance dependable, affordable, and environmentally responsible production and distribution of leasable minerals by identifying lands appropriate for lease and development.

Goal 2 – Allow environmentally responsible geophysical exploration for energy resources in the Dillon FO on lands administered by the BLM.

Oil and Gas

Management Common to All Alternatives

Public lands available for oil and gas leasing would be offered first by competitive bid at an oral auction. Stipulations, terms, and conditions would be applied at the time of leasing. Under all alternatives, interim management policy and guidelines for mineral leasing in Wilderness Study Areas would be applied as appropriate. Notices of Intent to conduct geophysical exploration would be reviewed and mitigation measures developed so as not to cause undue or unnecessary degradation for other resources. If unavailable lands were under the jurisdiction of another agency, leasing of such lands would only occur following consultation, and consent if necessary, from the surface managing agency.

Federal oil and gas leasing authority for public lands is found in the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920, as amended; and for acquired lands in the Acquired Lands Leasing Act of 1947, as amended. Leasing of federal oil and gas is affected by

other acts such as the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, the Wilderness Act of 1964, the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, and the Federal Onshore Oil and Gas Leasing Reform Act of 1987. Regulations and other guidance governing federal oil and gas leasing and lease operations are contained in 43 CFR Group 3100, Onshore Operating Orders, Notices to Lessees, and BLM handbooks, manuals and instruction memorandums. Regulations governing geophysical exploration are found at 43 CFR 3150.

An oil and gas lease grants the lessee the right to explore for, extract, remove, and dispose of oil and gas deposits that may be found on the leased lands. The lessee may exercise the rights conveyed by the lease, subject to lease terms and any lease stipulations (modifications of the lease), and permit approval requirements. When geophysical exploration is allowed, it will follow the procedures and regulations discussed in the “Oil and Gas” section of the **Appendix H**.

The terms of existing oil and gas leases cannot be changed by the decisions in the document. When the lease expires, the area will be managed for oil and gas according to the decisions reached in this document.

The BLM planning process determines availability of federal lands for oil and gas leasing where BLM is the surface management agency. For federal oil and gas where the surface is managed by another federal agency, the BLM will consult with that agency before issuing leases. In areas where oil and gas development may conflict with other resources, the areas may be closed to leasing. Regulations at part 43 CFR 3100.0-3(d); the Secretary’s general authority to prevent the waste and dissipation of public property; and the Attorney General’s Opinion of April 2, 1941 (Vol. 40 Op. Atty. Gen 41) allow the BLM to lease lands that are otherwise unavailable for leasing if oil and gas is being drained from such lands. If the unavailable lands were under the jurisdiction of another agency, leasing of such lands would only occur following consultation, and consent if necessary, from the surface managing agency.

Normally unavailable lands under the administration of the BLM would be leased only if a state or fee well is completed within the same spacing unit, or if the lands are within a producing unit. These lands would be leased with a no surface occupancy and no subsurface occupancy stipulation with no waiver, modification or exception provisions. There would only be a paper transaction with no physical impacts on the unavailable lands. There would be no exploration or development (drilling or production) within the unavailable lands. After issuance of a lease, the lease would be committed to a communitization agreement and the United States would then receive revenue in proportion to its acreage interest as it bears to the entire acreage interest committed to the agreements.

Areas where oil and gas development could coexist with other resource uses would be open to leasing under standard lease terms or with added stipulations. Stipulations are a part of the lease only when environmental and planning records show the need for them. Three types of stipulations describe how lease rights are modified: no surface occupancy, timing limitation (seasonal restriction), and controlled surface use. (For descriptions, see “Leasing Process” in the “Oil and Gas” section of **Appendix H**). Stipulations may be changed by application of waivers, exceptions, or modifications. The decision whether to grant waiver, exceptions, or modifications generally occurs during the Application for Permit to Drill approval process. If the authorized officer determines the change to be substantial, the proposed action would be subject to a 30-day public review period. Waivers are a permanent exemption from a lease stipulation. This occurs when the resource does not require the protection of stipulation. Exceptions are granted on a case-by-case basis. Each time the lessee applies for an exception, the resource objective of the stipulation must be met. Modifications are fundamental changes to the provisions of a lease stipulation either temporarily or for the term of the lease. On Bureau of Reclamation lands, stipulations that are recommended by the Bureau of Reclamation would be used (see Oil and Gas section in **Appendix H**).

Additional information can be provided to the lessee in the form of a lease notice. This notice does not place restrictions on lease operation, but does provide information about applicable laws and regulations, and the requirements for additional information to be supplied by the lessee.

After lease issuance, the lessee may conduct lease operations with an approved permit (see “Conditions of Approval” in the “Oil and Gas” section **Appendix H**). Proposed drilling and associated activities must be approved before beginning operations. The operator must file an Application for Permit to Drill or Sundry Notice that must be approved according to (1) lease stipulations, (2) Onshore Oil and Gas Order, and (3) regulations and laws (see “Permitting” in the “Oil and Gas” section of the Minerals **Appendix H**).

Table 5 summarizes the number of acres available or not available for leasing in the planning area by alternative and **Table 6** summarizes the lease terms and stipulations by alternative.

None of the lands within the Bear Trap Unit of the Lee Metcalf Wilderness would be available for oil and gas leasing under any of the alternatives. Nine of the ten Wilderness Study Areas in the planning area would also be unavailable. The Tobacco Root Tack-on WSA would be available under Alternatives B through D (see *Wilderness Study Area* section) but would not be available under Alternative A.

Table 5 Acres of Federal Mineral Estate Available or Not for Fluid Mineral Leasing				
	<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>D</i>
Acres Available for Oil and Gas Leasing	1,225,295	1,209,280	268,141	1,210,760
Under Standard Lease Terms	426,335	143,420	127,687	272,168
Under Controlled Surface Use or Timing Limitations	580,750	632,061	19,614	822,971
Under No Surface Occupancy	218,210	433,797	120,840	115,648
Acres Unavailable for Oil and Gas Leasing	129,316	145,554	1,086,596	143,857
Discretionary	203	17,438	958,480	15,741
Non-Discretionary	129,113	128,116	128,116	128,116

Table 6 Lease Terms and Stipulations by Alternative				
Key	LN Lease Notice SLT Standard Lease Term CSU Controlled Surface Use Stipulation N/A Not Applicable	TL Timing Limitation Stipulation NSO No Surface Occupancy Stipulation NL No Lease	Distances are enumerated and those equal or greater than 300 are feet and those 3 or less are miles. Time periods are month/day.	
<i>Resource</i>	<i>Alt A</i>	<i>Alt B</i>	<i>Alt C</i>	<i>Alt D</i>
Wildlife				
Sage Grouse Winter/Spring Range	TL 12/1-5/15	TL 12/1-5/15	NL	TL 12/1-5/15
Sage Grouse Strutting Grounds (leks)	NSO 500	NSO ¹ / ₄	NL ¹ / ₂	NSO ¹ / ₄
Sage Grouse Breeding Habitat	SLT	TL 3/1-6/30	NSO	TL 3/1-6/30
State Game Ranges (4)	NL/NSO	NSO	NL	NSO
Big Game Winter Range	TL 12/1-5/15	TL 12/1-5/15	NL	TL 12/1-5/15
Elk Calving/Big Game Birthing Areas	TL 5/1-6/30	TL 4/1-6/30	NL	SLT
Bighorn sheep yearlong habitat	TL 12/1-5/15	TL 11/1-6/30	NL	SLT
Bighorn sheep core areas	NSO	NSO	NL	SLT
Bald Eagle Nesting/Breeding	NSO ¹ / ₂	NSO ¹ / ₂	NL 1	NSO ¹ / ₂
	+ 1TL 2/1-8/31	+ 1TL 2/1-8/31		
Raptor Breeding Areas	¹ / ₂ TL 3/1-7/31	¹ / ₂ TL 3/1-7/31	NL ¹ / ₂	SLT
Waterfowl Production Molting Areas	NSO 500	¹ / ₂ TL 4/1-8/31	NL ¹ / ₂	TL 4/1-8/31
NAWCA/IMWJV wetland projects	NSO 1000	NSO ¹ / ₂	NL	NSO
Peregrine Falcon Breeding Territories	SLT	NSO 1	NL 1	NSO 1
Ferruginous hawk nesting areas	¹ / ₂ TL 3/1-7/31	NSO ¹ / ₂	NL ¹ / ₂	¹ / ₂ TL 3/1-7/31
		+ 1 TL 3/1-8/31		
Threatened, Endangered, and Special Status Species	CSU	CSU	CSU	CSU
Fisheries				
Westslope Cutthroat Trout Habitat 99-100% pure	NSO ¹ / ₄	NSO ¹ / ₂	NL 1	CSU ¹ / ₂
Westslope Cutthroat Trout Habitat 90 up to 99% pure	NSO ¹ / ₄	CSU ¹ / ₂	NSO	CSU
Fluvial and adfluvial arctic grayling	NSO ¹ / ₄	NSO ¹ / ₂	NSO 1	CSU
Class 1 Fisheries (Blue Ribbon)	NSO 1000	NSO ¹ / ₂	NSO 1	CSU ¹ / ₂

Table 6 - continued
Lease Terms and Stipulations by Alternative

Key	LN	Lease Notice	TL	Timing Limitation Stipulation
	SLT	Standard Lease Term	NSO	No Surface Occupancy Stipulation
	CSU	Controlled Surface Use Stipulation	NL	No Lease
	N/A	Not Applicable		
	Distances are enumerated and those equal or greater than 300 are feet and those 3 or less are miles. Time periods are month/day.			
<i>Resource</i>	<i>Alt A</i>	<i>Alt B</i>	<i>Alt C</i>	<i>Alt D</i>
Recreation				
Developed Sites	NSO 300	NSO	NSO	CSU ¹ / ₄
Undeveloped Recreation Sites	NSO 300	—	—	—
Special Recreation Management Areas	—	CSU	NSO	SLT
Vehicle Use Restrictions	CSU	CSU	CSU	CSU
Cultural Resources				
Cultural Res. Inventory Requirement	LN	CSU	CSU	CSU
NRHP Eligible Properties/Districts	NSO 300	NSO 300	NL + NSO ¹ / ₂	NSO
Traditional Cultural Properties	NSO 300	NSO ¹ / ₂	NL + NSO ¹ / ₂	NSO
Paleontological Resources				
Paleo. Inventory Requirement	LN	CSU	CSU	CSU
Known Paleo. Sites/Locales	SLT	NSO	NL	NSO
Visual Resources				
VRM Class II, III & IV Areas	CSU	CSU	CSU	SLT
Vegetation, Wetlands and Riparian				
Special Status Plant Inventory Requirement	SLT	CSU	CSU	CSU
Known or Discovered Populations	SLT	NSO ¹ / ₄	NSO ¹ / ₄	NSO
Wetlands, Floodplains & Riparian Areas	NSO 500, 1000	NSO	NSO	SLT
Landforms, Soils, and Water Quality				
Active Mass Movement Areas	CSU	NSO	NSO	SLT
Slopes ≥30%	CSU	CSU	CSU	SLT
Trails, Rivers and Special Designations				
National Historic Trails	NSO 300	NSO ¹ / ₂	NL 1	SLT
National Historic Landmarks	NSO 300	NL	NL + NSO ¹ / ₂	NSO
Continental Divide Natl. Scenic Trail	NSO 300	NSO ¹ / ₂	NL	SLT
Rivers Suitable for WSR Designation	N/A	N/A	CSU (8 segments)	N/A
Potential ACECs*	See note*	See note*	See note*	See note*
Other Resources				
Major Road ROWs	NSO 100	SLT	SLT	SLT
R&PPs and 2920 Authorizations	SLT	NSO	NSO	NSO

*Stipulations developed to protect various resource values would protect identified relevant and important values within potential ACECs.

Alternative A

Under the continuation of current management, approximately nine percent (129,316 acres) of the planning area would not be available for oil and gas leasing. This includes the Bear Trap Wilderness Area and ten Wilderness Study Areas, as well as recreation areas in the Bear Trap area withdrawn from leasing. The remainder of mineral estate in the planning area would be available for leasing, subject to the stipulations specified in **Table 6** or under Standard Lease Terms. **Map 27** depicts lands available and unavailable for leasing under Alternative A.

Alternative B

Under Alternative B, 11 percent (145,554 acres) of the planning area would not be available for oil and gas leasing. This includes the Bear Trap Wilderness Area and nine Wilderness Study Areas, federal minerals under lands administered by the Agricultural Research Service, and lands within the boundaries of National Historic Landmarks. The remainder of mineral estate in the planning area would be available for leasing, subject to the stipulations specified in **Table 6** or to Standard Lease Terms. **Map 28** depicts lands available and unavailable under Alternative B.

Under this alternative, the timing limitation applied to sage grouse breeding habitats would be based on a three mile buffer given local circumstances and additional information available for the Dillon planning area rather than a more generally accepted two mile buffer. Radio telemetry studies in southwest Montana indicate that some populations of sage grouse are migratory and move considerable distances during their annual life cycle, including during their nesting season. In addition, habitat in the planning area is unevenly distributed. Based on the most current research examined in the WAFWA guidelines (Connelly et al. 2000), a five kilometer buffer is recommended for unevenly distributed habitats (thus the three miles for the DFO). The timing restriction applies to potentially suitable sage grouse habitat (sagebrush areas with adequate sage cover for nesting); therefore, not all acres within the three mile buffer would be affected by the stipulation. Timeframes for the timing limitation have also been adjusted to limit use from March 1 through June 30 rather than March 15 through June 15. This is because higher elevations in the southwest part of Montana (in comparison to eastern Montana) result in later use of breeding and nesting areas in certain portions of the Dillon planning area, while information from radio telemetry studies show use of low elevation leks as early as March 1.

Alternative C

Under Alternative C, 80 percent (1,086,596 acres) of the planning area would not be available for oil and gas leasing. This includes all the lands identified in Alternative B, plus lands in these additional locations:

- Sage Grouse Winter/Spring Range
- Lands within 1/2 mile of Sage Grouse Strutting Grounds (leks)
- Big Game Winter Range
- Elk Calving/Big Game Birthing Areas
- Bighorn Sheep Yearlong habitat
- Bighorn Sheep Core Areas
- Lands within 1 mile of Bald Eagle Nesting/Breeding areas
- Lands within 1/2 mile of Raptor Breeding Areas
- Lands within 1/2 mile of waterfowl production molting areas
- NAWCA/IMWJV wetland projects
- Lands within 1 mile of peregrine falcon breeding territories
- Lands within 1/2 mile of ferruginous hawk nesting areas
- Lands within 1 mile of 99-100 percent pure westslope cutthroat trout habitats
- Lands within the boundaries of NRHP eligible properties and districts
- Lands within the boundaries of Traditional Cultural Properties
- Lands within known paleontological sites/locales
- National Historic Trails
- Continental Divide National Scenic Trail
- Rivers determined suitable for Wild and Scenic River designation

The remainder of mineral estate in the planning area would be available for leasing, subject to the stipulations specified in **Table 6** or to Standard Lease Terms. **Map 29** depicts lands available and unavailable under Alternative B.

Alternative D

Under Alternative D, 11 percent (143,857 acres) of the planning area would not be available for oil and gas leasing, including the Bear Trap Wilderness Area, nine Wilderness Study Areas, and federal minerals under lands administered by the Agricultural Research Service. The remainder of mineral estate in the planning area would be available for leasing, subject to the stipulations specified in **Table 6** or to Standard Lease Terms. **Map 30** depicts lands available and unavailable under Alternative B.

This alternative would use the same timing limitation for sage grouse breeding habitats as described in the rationale under Alternative B.

Coal and Oil Shale

Management Common to All Alternatives

Under all alternatives, BLM would consider proposals for coal and oil shale leasing on a case-by-case basis for mineral resources under the administration of the federal government. To date, no areas have been identified with economic reserves

to support future leasing analysis. Site-specific environmental analysis and a plan amendment would be required to lease for coal or oil shale.

There are currently no regulations governing the leasing of oil shale. Any leases issued would be issued under the authority of 30 U.S.C. Chapter 3A, Subchapter V, Sec. 241 which authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to lease deposits of oil shale. Unsuitability criteria described in 43 CFR 3461 would be applied to coal lands determined to have development potential on a case-by-case.

Phosphate and Other Solid Minerals

Management Common to All Alternatives

The BLM would provide opportunities for exploration and development of solid minerals throughout the planning area. Lands within the Bear Trap Wilderness would not be available. Lands within Wilderness Study Areas would be subject to application of the interim management policy. All lands outside of these areas would be available.

Reclamation occurring at the phosphate mine in the Centennial Mountains would continue to be monitored by the BLM.

Geothermal

Management Common to All Alternatives

Lands in the planning area would be available for geothermal leasing, unless located within wilderness or WSAs or in instances where it is determined that issuing the lease would cause unnecessary or undue degradation to public lands or resources. There are no Known Geothermal Resource Areas (KGRAs) in the planning area. A site-specific environmental analysis would be prepared should interest be expressed in exploring for or developing geothermal resources in the planning area. This analysis would address the application of stipulations and develop any additional mitigating measures over and above the lease stipulations required. Stipulations developed in this document for oil and gas leases would be applied to any geothermal lease issued if appropriate. Geothermal exploration and production activity is sufficiently different from oil and gas that the stipulations developed for oil and gas may not be appropriate and could be modified.

Geophysical Exploration

Management Common to All Alternatives

Oil and gas geophysical activity on public lands the surface of which is administered by the BLM is governed by regulations found at 43 CFR Subparts 3150, 3151, and 3154.

Additional guidance is found in BLM Manual Section 3150 and Handbook 3150. For additional information on geophysical operations and the BLM's procedures and regulations see the "Geophysical Operations" portion of the oil and gas section of the **Appendix H**.

The BLM will review Notices of Intent to Conduct Geophysical Exploration (NOI) in the planning area and develop appropriate mitigation measures so as not to create undue and unnecessary degradation. A site-specific environmental analysis will be prepared for each NOI filed.

Alternative A

Vehicular use would be restricted for geophysical exploration on an estimated 65,544 acres in the following areas:

- East Fork of Blacktail Deer Creek
- Centennial Mountains
- Upper Clark Canyon
- Axolotl Lakes Area
- Madison River
- Big Hole River
- on unstable and highly erodible soils
- on paleontological sites.

Map 31 depicts these areas. Geophysical exploration in the rest of the planning area would be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Alternatives B, C and D

The oil and gas lease stipulations developed in this document would serve as the starting point for developing required mitigation measures for each NOI. On a case-by-case basis geophysical exploration may be allowed in areas closed to oil and gas leasing based on the nature and level of impacts from the exploration, and consistency with other applicable policy. Geophysical operations may also be allowed in areas of No Surface Occupancy (NSO) stipulations for oil and gas leasing. A determination would be made regarding the nature and impacts of the proposed exploration and its impacts and the reason behind the NSO restriction. This would be documented and be the basis for allowing or not allowing geophysical exploration in these areas of NSO. Finally, the transient nature of geophysical exploration and the short-term impacts of the operations may provide an opportunity for operations to occur in seasonal wildlife areas during the time of closure under lease stipulations without creating detrimental effects on wildlife. As such the proposed exploration would be analyzed for the length and nature of its impacts to determine if operations would be allowable during the period of closure found in lease stipulation(s). Travel restrictions as proposed under each alternative would be applied to geophysical exploration, with consideration given to exceptions as appropriate and granted on a case-by-case basis.

MINERALS – LOCATABLE MINERALS

Goal – Encourage and facilitate development of locatable minerals in the manner to prevent unnecessary or undue degradation.

Management Common to All Alternatives

Standard management practices in the public land administration of locatable minerals would continue across all alternatives. BLM would coordinate with MT DEQ during the review, approval, inspection and reclamation of mining operations. At a minimum, conduct an annual compliance inspections on each active notice. Requirements of all state and federal laws would be met in the management of mining operations.

Administration of locatable minerals on public lands would continue as required by law and regulation (43 CFR 3809) by taking the following steps:

- Review and process notices to ensure the proposed action does not create unnecessary or undue degradation of the environment.
- Review and process plans of operation to ensure the proposed action does not create unnecessary or undue degradation of the environment.
- Conduct at a minimum annual compliance inspections on each active notice and plan of operation.
- Allow casual use where work is done by hand and no explosives are used. Refer inquiries to appropriate agencies for further guidance on other permit requirements.

Terms and conditions would be applied to mining activities (within the constraints of the mining law) to meet land health standards for uplands, riparian and wetlands, water quality, air quality, and native plant and animal species.

Approximately 30,000 acres of federal mineral estate currently withdrawn from operation of the mining law would remain closed to locatable mineral entry under all alternatives. This would include areas withdrawn for the Bear Trap Unit of the Lee Metcalf Wilderness, the Beaverhead River acquisition, the Axolotl Lakes acquisition, FERC Power Projects on the Madison River and Wisconsin Creek, and the reservoir site reserve for Lima Reservoir. It would also include areas withdrawn for several BLM recreation sites, public water reserves, and air navigation site, the Clark Canyon Reservoir Reclamation Project, and several Forest Service administrative sites located outside National Forest Boundaries. More specific information pertaining to withdrawals can be found in the Lands and Realty section. All recommendations to dispose of or withdraw additional lands would be analyzed to determine the mineral potential (e.g.,

mineral character) of each tract before any decision is finalized.

Alternative A

All federal mineral estate except for the approximately 30,000 acres currently withdrawn and the additional acreage proposed for withdrawal would be available for locatable mineral entry and would be managed as described under Management Common to All Alternatives.

Approximately 12,300 acres would be recommended for withdrawal from the mining law, including the following areas:

- BLM lands located east of Matsingale Creek in the Centennial Mountains area (12,270 acres)
- Road Agent Rock (10 acres)
- Squirrel Rock (10 acres)
- Wedding Ring Rock (10 acres)

Map 32 depicts these locations.

Alternative B

Management would be the same as described in Alternative A, except less acres would be recommended for withdrawal.

Approximately 2,305 acres would be recommended for withdrawal from the mining law, including the following areas:

- Christnot Mill (20 acres)
- Developed Recreation Sites not already withdrawn (797 acres)
- Lewis's Lookout (160 acres)
- BLM lands that are not already withdrawn located along the Madison River from the north Bear Trap Wilderness boundary north to the DFO boundary (1609 acres)
- Road Agent Rock (10 acres)
- Squirrel Rock (10 acres)
- Wedding Ring Rock (10 acres)

(Acres may not add to total due to overlap of proposed areas.)

Map 33 depicts these locations.

In addition, special management would require withdrawal of lands in the Beaverhead Rock, Everson Creek and Virginia City ACECs.

Alternative C

Management would be the same as described in Alternative A, except more acres would be recommended for withdrawal.

Approximately 25,992 acres would be recommended for withdrawal from the mining law, including the following areas:

- Axolotl Lakes watershed area (1,117 acres)
- Beaverhead Rock (120 acres)
- Christnot Mill (20 acres)
- Developed Recreation Sites not already withdrawn (797 acres)
- Everson Creek (2,160 acres)
- Lewis's Lookout (480 acres)
- BLM lands along the Madison River located between Cliff Lake and the DFO boundary not already withdrawn (4,661 acres)
- Muddy Creek/Big Sheep Creek (13,097 acres)
- Road Agent Rock (10 acres)
- Squirrel Rock (10 acres)
- Virginia City (513 acres)
- Wedding Ring Rock (10 acres)
- Westslope cutthroat trout stream habitats, 100' either side of stream, with purity of 90 percent or greater (3,507 acres)

Map 34 depicts these locations.

Alternative D

Management would be the same as described in Alternative A, except the least number of acres would be recommended for withdrawal under this alternative.

Approximately 70 acres would be recommended for withdrawal from the mining law, including the following areas:

- Lewis's Lookout (40 acres)
- Road Agent Rock (10 acres)
- Squirrel Rock (10 acres)
- Wedding Ring Rock (10 acres)

Map 35 depicts these locations.

In addition, special management would require withdrawal of lands in the Beaverhead Rock and Everson Creek ACEC.

Developed recreation sites would not be proposed for withdrawal under this alternative. Instead, FLPMA right-of-ways would be reserved for all developed recreation sites not already withdrawn from mineral entry. Table 7 summarizes the acres proposed for withdrawal by alternative.

MINERALS – MINERAL MATERIALS

Goal – Provide for the extraction of mineral materials to meet public demand, while minimizing adverse impacts to other resource values.

Table 7
Acres Proposed for Withdrawal from
Locatable Mineral Entry by Alternative

	<i>Alt. A</i>	<i>Alt. B</i>	<i>Alt. C</i>	<i>Alt. D</i>
Axolotl Lakes	0	0	1,117	0
Beaverhead Rock	0	120*	120	120*
Christnot Mill	0	20	20	0
Developed Rec Sites	0	797	797	0
Everson Creek	0	2,160*	2,160	8,608*
Lewis' Lookout	0	160	480	40
Madison River lands	0	1,609	4,661	0
Muddy Creek	0	0	13,097	0
Public lands east of Matsingale Creek	12,270	0	0	0
Road Agent Rock	10	10	10	10
Squirrel Rock	10	10	10	10
Virginia City	0	513*	513	0
Wedding Ring Rock	10	10	10	10
WCT 90%	0	0	3,507	0
Total Standard Mgmt.	12,300	2,305	25,992	70
Total Special Mgmt.	0	2,793	0	8,728

* This would be considered "special management" to protect relevant and important values with a proposed ACEC in this alternative. See the ACEC section for additional details.

**Acres do not necessarily add up due to overlap of some proposed withdrawal areas.

Management Common to All Alternatives

Currently authorized mineral material sites would be maintained as open under all alternatives unless circumstances dictate they should be closed. Extraction of gravel from previously disturbed sites would be encouraged. No mineral materials would be taken from any valid existing mining claim.

Alternative A

Under continuation of current management, new mineral material sites would be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. With the exception of lands located in the Bear Trap Wilderness and within Wilderness Study Area boundaries (a total of 129,204 acres), the entire planning area would be available for establishment of future sites, pending site-specific analysis. Map 36 depicts areas available and unavailable for future material sites, subject to site-specific review. Terms and conditions to protect public land and resource values would be applied on a case-by-case basis.

Alternative B

Under Alternative B, several areas in addition to the Bear Trap Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas would be off-limits for consideration of mineral material sites. These areas include the following:

- Centennial Sandhills
- Christnot Mill
- Developed recreation sites
- Lands within one-quarter mile of Big Sheep Creek Road except in sections 26 and 35 in T14S, R10W and section 2 in T15S, R10W
- Lewis's Lookout
- Sheep Creek Common Use Area

As a result, 136,226 acres would be closed to mineral material disposal (see [Map 37](#)). Proposals for new material sites would be analyzed on a case-by-case basis, and new pits would only be established when a significant need for material is demonstrated and a significant amount of material will be removed. Standard Operating Procedures as detailed in **Appendix H** would be applied to newly authorized sites.

Current mineral material sites would be maintained until material was exhausted or other circumstances warrant closure, except for the Sheep Creek Common Use Area which would be closed and unavailable unless the Hidden Pasture WSA is released during the life of the plan.

Alternative C

Under this alternative, no new mineral material sites would be established over the life of the plan. Currently authorized sites would be maintained until material was exhausted or other circumstances warranted closure. As a result, 681 acres in the planning area would be open to mineral material disposal (existing sites) as shown on [Map 38](#) and the remaining planning area would be closed.

Alternative D

Under Alternative D, BLM would respond to all requests from government entities and private individuals for establishment of new mineral material sites and proposals on a case-by-case basis. In addition, BLM would work to identify and open locations in addition to currently authorized sites for use by the public. As in Alternative B, Standard Operating Procedures detailed in **Appendix H** would be applied to newly authorized sites. The Bear Trap Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas would remain be unavailable for mineral material sites (see [Map 36](#)).

RECREATION

Goal 1 – Provide a diverse array of quality, resource based recreation opportunities while protecting and interpreting the resource values, providing educational opportunities, minimizing user conflicts, and promoting public safety.

Goal 2 – Develop and maintain appropriate recreation facilities, balancing public demand, protection of Public Land resources, and fiscal responsibility.

Management Common to All Alternatives

(Management of motorized use, for recreational and other purposes, is covered in the *Travel Management* section.)

All existing recreation facilities would be maintained and managed, some in partnership with other agencies or groups. These facilities include:

- Axolotl Lakes Cabin
- Bear Trap Trailhead
- Clute's Landing
- East Fork Blacktail Deer Creek
- Deadwood Gulch
- Fall Creek Day Use
- Kobayashi Beach
- Maiden Rock
- Ney Ranch Recreation Site
- Palisades Campground
- Palisades Day Use
- Powerhouse Boat Launch
- Red Mountain Campground
- Red Mountain South
- Ruby Creek Campground
- Ruby Creek Boat Launch
- Ruby Reservoir
- Scanlon Boat Launch
- Shoshone Ridge
- Trail Creek Picnic Area
- Warm Springs

[Map 39](#) depicts developed recreation site locations in the planning area. Emphasis would be placed on providing interpretive and informational signs and materials for public lands visitors, maintaining existing facilities to a standard consistent with the recreational setting, and limiting development of additional facilities to those areas where public recreational use of surrounding public lands requires them.

Although designation of Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMA) varies by alternative, if designated, the recreational emphasis for each of the SRMAs would be as follows:

- Axolotl Lakes (semi-primitive non-motorized summer recreation use, and both motorized and non-motorized winter use)
- Big Sheep Creek (semi-primitive recreation, semi-primitive camping)
- Centennial Mountains (primitive and semi-primitive, non-motorized recreation)
- East Fork Blacktail Deer Creek (primitive and semi-primitive, non-motorized recreation, with limited camping)
- Lower Big Hole (river recreation, day use, and semi-primitive camping)
- Lower Madison River (day use, water based recreation at Ennis Lake, wilderness opportunities in the Bear Trap Canyon, non-motorized, river-based recreation with semi-developed camping opportunities along the Lower Madison River). (The Lower Madison SRMA extends the existing Bear Trap/Red Mountain SRMA to include recreational lands acquired on the shore of Ennis Lake. The existing SRMA boundary begins at the outlet of Ennis Lake. The modified SRMA boundary would include BLM lands surrounding Ennis Lake, north to the Madison-Gallatin county line at Black's Ford along the Madison River).
- Rocky Hills SRMA (day use mountain biking and hiking, primitive camping)
- Ruby Reservoir (camping, reservoir access)
- Ruby Mountains (primitive and semi-primitive non-motorized recreation)
- South Pioneers (motorized recreation, mountain biking, day use)
- Upper Madison River (non-motorized river recreation use, semi-developed camping opportunities)

Areas identified for non-motorized recreational emphasis will continue to allow motorized access consistent with the approved route designations for those areas (see **Maps 44-45 and 47-52, oversized**), but will not favor management activities that encourage increased motorized recreational use.

Significant cave resources will be protected in accordance with the Federal Cave Resource Protection Act of 1988.

Alternative A

Under this alternative, lands recently acquired adjacent to the Axolotl Lakes WSA would continue to be managed under the management described in BLM EA #MT-050-2001-13 for the Axolotl Lakes land exchange. Provisions include:

- No permanent grazing allocation.
- No recreational facility development.
- No special recreation permits for outfitters.
- Maintain the integrity of the cabin and pursue a rental program and other administrative uses.

- No motorized use *except*: (1) snowmobile use between December 1 and May 15, and (2) motorized administrative uses.

Eight areas would continue to be designated as SRMAs under the current management alternative as depicted on **Map 40**. These include:

- Big Sheep Creek
- East Fork Blacktail Deer Creek
- Axolotl Lakes
- Upper Madison River
- Bear Trap/Red Mountain
- Ruby Reservoir
- Centennial Mountains
- Lower Big Hole River

Alternative B

Under Alternatives B, C, and D, management of the Axolotl Lakes acquisition area would continue as provided for under interim management described in Alternative A until a management plan could be developed for the area in cooperation with FWP.

BLM would also work with FWP to establish appropriate use levels for BLM launch sites as necessary to ensure maintenance of quality recreation opportunities on streams and lakes in the planning area.

Seven of the eight currently designated SRMAs (Big Sheep Creek, East Fork Blacktail Deer Creek, Axolotl Lakes, Lower Big Hole River, Upper Madison, Lower Madison, Centennial Mountains), would be retained under this alternative and boundaries adjusted as depicted on **Map 41**.

Ruby Reservoir would not be designated an SRMA but would be managed as a developed recreation site within the Dillon Extensive Recreation Management Area.

Two new areas, the South Pioneers and the Ruby Mountains would be designated as SRMAs under this alternative. In addition the Rocky Hills area, including the Henneberry Ridge WSA, would be designated as an SRMA if the WSA is released from further consideration as wilderness, and if it is determined that the demand for mountain bike opportunities in the Dillon area might be satisfied through development of a trail system in the area.

A Recreation Area Management Plan would be prepared for the South Pioneers to consider opportunities for motorized and/or mountain bike trail development. Subsequent planning would also occur under this alternative for the Rocky Hills area if the Henneberry Ridge WSA is released. Additional recreational support facilities would also be considered at the Maiden Rock Boat Launch on the lower Big

Hole River. The Storey Property (within sections 13, 14 and 24 of T8S, R1W) along the Madison River would be developed to include a boat launch, parking area and toilet.

Alternative C

As in Alternative B, BLM would prepare a plan in coordination with FWP to guide management of the Axolotl Lakes acquisition lands.

BLM would work with FWP in this alternative as in Alternative B to establish appropriate use levels for BLM launch sites as necessary to ensure maintenance of quality recreation opportunities on streams and lakes in the planning area.

Seven of the eight currently designated SRMAs (Big Sheep Creek, East Fork Blacktail Deer Creek, Axolotl Lakes, Upper Madison River lands, Lower Madison River lands, Centennial Mountains, Lower Big Hole River), would be retained under this alternative and boundaries adjusted as depicted on [Map 42](#).

Ruby Reservoir would not be designated an SRMA but would be managed as a developed recreation site.

Alternative D

As in Alternative B, BLM would prepare a plan in coordination with FWP to guide management of the Axolotl Lakes acquisition lands.

Use levels for BLM launch sites would not be established as a result of selection of Alternative D. As in Alternative C, the Storey Property (within sections 13, 14, and 24 of T8S, R1W) along the Madison River would be developed to include a boat launch, parking area and toilet. Recreational support facilities would also be developed at the Point of Rocks area along the Jefferson River to better accommodate current use as a boat launch access site, and minimize impacts of unmanaged recreational use.

Seven of the eight currently designated SRMAs (Big Sheep Creek, East Fork Blacktail Deer Creek, Axolotl Lakes, Upper Madison River lands, Lower Madison River lands, Centennial Mountains, Lower Big Hole River), would be retained under this alternative and boundaries adjusted as depicted on [Map 43](#). Ruby Reservoir would not be designated an SRMA but would be managed as a developed recreation site.

Two new areas, the South Pioneers and the Ruby Mountains would be designated as SRMAs under this alternative. In addition the Rocky Hills area within the Henneberry Ridge WSA would be designated as an SRMA if the WSA is released.

As in Alternative B, a Recreation Area Management Plan would be prepared for the South Pioneers to consider opportunities for motorized and/or mountain bike trail development. Subsequent planning would also occur under this alternative for the Rocky Hills area if the Henneberry Ridge WSA is released. Additional recreational support facilities would also be considered at the Maiden Rock Boat Launch.

Goal 3 – Issue special recreation permits in an equitable manner for specific recreational uses of the public lands and related waters as a means to minimize user conflicts, control visitor use, to protect recreation resources, and to provide for private and commercial recreation use.

Management Common to All Alternatives

Current special recreation permits would continue to be managed in accordance with Special Recreation Permit Handbook 2930-1.

Alternative A

A moratorium was placed on any new SRP applications requiring additional analysis until the RMP is completed. Upon completion of the plan this moratorium would be lifted and applications would be accepted and considered on a case-by-case basis for any recreational activities on public lands that require a permit.

Alternative B

Seven Outfitter Permit Areas (OPAs) as depicted on [Map 39](#) would be established to manage outfitted big game hunting.

Use levels were established for each OPA based on historic data and reflect the total of use days assigned to each permittee providing big game hunting in that area. “Use” is quantified in terms of use days and represents the number of clients multiplied by the number of days of use. Use levels are based on an average of reported use between 1990 and 2001. In cases where a permit has not been in existence for this length of time, the average is based on data collected for the period of time the permit has been in existence.

Use levels for outfitted big game hunting would be maintained but not increased in Alternative B. This would result in the following permitted use by area:

- Blacktail Mountains/Sage Creek: 150
- Centennial Mountains and Valley: 490
- East Pioneers/Highland Mountains: 90
- Horse Prairie/Tendoys/Big Sheep Creek: 550
- Madison River: 140
- Ruby Mountains/Sweetwater: 60
- Tobacco Root Mountains: 20

Permit applications for new outfitted big game hunting would only be accepted if use days were available.

Applications for recreation-related activities other than outfitted big game hunting would be analyzed on a case-by-case basis.

Alternative C

Use levels for outfitted big game hunting would decrease by 15 percent within the seven OPAs. This would result in the following permitted use by area:

- Blacktail Mountains/Sage Creek: 127
- Centennial Mountains and Valley: 416
- East Pioneers/Highland Mountains: 76
- Horse Prairie/Tendoys/Big Sheep Creek: 467
- Madison River: 119
- Ruby Mountains/Sweetwater: 51
- Tobacco Root Mountains: 17

Permit applications for new outfitted big game hunting would only be accepted if use days were available.

Applications for recreation-related activities other than outfitted big game hunting would be analyzed as in Alternative B.

Alternative D

Use levels for outfitted big game hunting would allow for an increase in three of the seven OPAs, with the remaining four OPAs managed at established use levels. Use in the Blacktail Mountains/Sage Creek OPA would increase from current use levels by an additional 145 visitor use days, by 60 visitor use days within the Highlands portion of the East Pioneers/Highland Mountains OPA, and by 40 visitor use days in the area west of the Ruby River within the Ruby Mountain/Sweetwater OPA. This would result in the following permitted use by area:

- Blacktail Mountains/Sage Creek: 295
- Centennial Mountains and Valley: 490
- East Pioneers/Highland Mountains: 150
- Horse Prairie/Tendoys/Big Sheep Creek: 550
- Madison River: 140
- Ruby Mountains/Sweetwater: 100
- Tobacco Root Mountains: 20

Permit applications for new outfitted big game hunting would only be accepted if use days were available.

Applications for recreation-related activities other than outfitted big game hunting would be analyzed as in Alternative B.

Levels of Use by Alternative for Outfitted Big Game Hunting

Outfitter Permit Area	Alt A	Alt B	Alt C	Alt D
Blacktail Mountains/Sage Creek	Maintain established permitted use across Dillon Field Office	150	127	295
Centennial Mountains and Valley		490	416	490
E. Pioneers/Highland Mountains		90	76	90 E. Pioneers 60 Highlands
Horse Prairie/Tendoys/Big Sheep Creek		550	467	550
Madison River		140	119	140
Ruby Mountain/Sweetwater		60	51	60 east of Ruby River 40 west of Ruby River
Tobacco Root Mountains	No OPAs	20	17	20

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Goal – Provide opportunities for the development of renewable energy resources from sources such as wind, biomass, solar, and low-impact hydropower while minimizing adverse impacts to other resource values.

Management Common to All Alternatives

Proposals for the development of renewable energy resources from sources such as wind, biomass, solar, and low-impact hydropower would be analyzed on a case-by-case basis. Although no areas would be specifically designated for renewable energy development, opportunities for such development would be provided to the extent consistent with other goals, objectives, and requirements of the land use plan. Best management practices (BMPs), including but not limited to those proposed in the Programmatic Wind Energy EIS currently being prepared by BLM (USDI-BLM 2004), would be adopted when and where applicable as elements of renewable energy development proposals and/or as right-of-way grant stipulations.

Alternative A

For those renewable energy projects requiring rights-of-way, no lands within the planning area would be managed as designated right-of-way avoidance or exclusion areas, nor would any lands be managed as designated right-of-way corridors or use areas. Refer to the “Land Use Authorizations” portion of the *Lands and Realty* section of this Chapter for a more detailed discussion of how rights-of-way would be managed under this alternative.

Alternatives B, C, and D

In those situations in which a renewable energy project would require a right-of-way, designated right-of-way avoidance and exclusion areas as well as designated right-of-way corridors and use areas would be taken into account. Refer to the “Land Use Authorizations” portion of the *Lands and Realty* section of this Chapter for a more detailed discussion of how rights-of-way would be managed under each of these alternatives.

TRANSPORTATION AND FACILITIES MAINTENANCE

Goal – Manage facilities, including roads and trails, to provide for public access or administrative needs, while maintaining or protecting resource values, in coordination with other federal agencies, state and local governments, and private landowners.

Management Common to All Alternatives

BLM would maintain transportation system roads under its jurisdiction in accordance with assigned maintenance levels (see Chapter 3 section on *Transportation and Facilities*) and in consideration of resource issues including but not limited to proliferation of weeds and disturbance of cultural resources. Non-system roads would be maintained on an as needed basis, dependent on time, funding, and access priorities. Roads and trails on BLM-administered land under jurisdiction of other entities would be maintained by the appropriate holder of rights within the provisions of the granting authority or right.

New roads determined by BLM to be necessary for permanent or long-term use as part of BLM’s transportation system would be constructed in consideration of the type of use and level of road necessary and in accordance with standards and guidelines in BLM Handbook 9113 (see the *Travel Management* section for additional discussion on “new roads”). Where a new permanent road would provide better access, existing routes in the vicinity would be identified for closure and reclamation if wildlife displacement, habitat fragmentation, or other issues are a concern.

New roads determined by BLM to be necessary on a temporary basis would be constructed to the minimum standard necessary for the activity proposed, and would be closed or reclaimed.

Other facilities such as boat ramps, communication facilities, etc. would be maintained according to Bureau standards and to meet public health and safety requirements.

TRAVEL MANAGEMENT AND OHV USE

Goal – In coordination with other federal agencies, state and local governments, and private landowners, manage motorized travel to provide recreational experiences while maintaining or protecting resource values.

Management Common to All Alternatives

BLM would continue to participate with the Southwest Montana Interagency Travel Management Committee (preparers of the Interagency Visitor/Travel Map) and any seasonal limitations to motorized vehicle use would be periodically reviewed and established by this group. Approximate dates of seasonal restrictions are provided by alternative. Specific dates would be agreed upon and finalized by the interagency travel group.

Travel within the Centennial Mountains would be managed according to the decisions made in the Centennial Mountains Travel Management Plan (USDI-BLM 2001a). Import-

tant elements of that decision which are not reflected in the 1996 edition of the Southwest Montana Interagency Visitor/Travel Map include:

- Closure of a portion of the Corral Creek Road to motorized vehicle use
- Closure of the Price-Peet Road beyond the constructed segment to motorized vehicle use
- Limiting all motorized wheeled vehicle travel to designated routes
- Closure of the area to mountain bike use except on routes designated open to motorized vehicle use

Under all alternatives, 46,976 acres would be classified as “Closed” under the regulations at 43 CFR 8340 - 8342. These areas are currently closed to all motor vehicles, including snowmobiles, yearlong. The areas include; Bear Trap Canyon Wilderness (6,347 acres), Centennial Mountains WSA (27,691 acres), East Fork Blacktail Deer Creek WSA (6,230 acres), and the south end of the Blacktail Mountains WSA (6,893 acres). Although some of these areas contain short segments of roads which will continue to be open to vehicles at least seasonally, these road segments do not provide access to the majority of acres in the area identified as closed. By contrast, other areas currently identified as closed to all motor vehicles, but with designated routes providing access to the majority of the area, are identified as “limited” in accordance with the definition provided in 43 CFR 8340.0-5 (g).

Travel Management maps for all alternatives reflect those routes that would be open to travel by the general public if access is available (across private or other lands) to those routes that exist on public lands. Prior to producing an interagency travel map for use by the general public, an effort will be made to eliminate those routes where no access is available to reach the public lands (across private or other lands). However, showing those routes as designated open for public use within this plan will allow for future use of that route if access becomes available to reach them.

Routes on public lands that are not accessible to the general public (across private or other lands) would be closed to all motorized wheeled vehicle travel except where specifically authorized. Access for people with disabilities under section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 would be considered on a case-by-case basis. Authorized travel associated with administration of grazing permits, or other specifically authorized uses would be allowed on existing routes not open to the general public only as necessary for enjoyment of the rights associated with that use. See **Appendix I** for information on allowances and exceptions.

No regulations currently exist to either assert or recognize R.S. 2477 rights-of-way. It is beyond the scope of this document to recognize or reject R.S. 2477 assertions, and this

issue is not addressed further. At such time as a decision is made on R.S. 2477 assertions, BLM will adjust its travel routes accordingly, if necessary.

Under all alternatives OHV use would be managed consistent with the definitions and prescriptions identified in the Final OHV EIS (USDI-BLM and USDA-FS 2001a), unless stated otherwise within the alternative. All acreage and mileage numbers provided within this section are approximate, and are based on calculations from the GIS database.

Alternative A

Under continuation of current management, motorized vehicle travel would continue to be managed in accordance with the Southwest Montana Interagency Visitor/Travel Map as modified by the Final OHV EIS (USDI-BLM and USDA-FS 2001a). The June 2003 Record of Decision by the BLM limits motorized wheeled cross-country vehicle travel yearlong to previously existing routes as described in the EIS and Record of Decision in areas previously designated as “open,” or designated as a “0” area on the Interagency Travel Map. Cross-country travel by wheeled motorized vehicles is prohibited throughout the planning area. Other seasonally restricted areas and road closures provided by the Interagency Travel Map would continue to apply.

854,250 acres would be managed as limited.

- 2,102 miles of road on BLM lands would be designated as open to public travel
- 242 miles of those roads designated open to travel would be subject to seasonal restrictions.

46,976 acres would be managed as closed to OHV use. **Maps 44 and 45 (oversized)** depict motorized route designations for wheeled vehicles under Alternative A.

822,824 acres would be available for use by snowmobiles during some or all of the year. 78,402 acres would be closed to snowmobile use.

The following areas would be closed to snowmobile use as depicted on **Map 46**:

- Bear Trap Wilderness
- Centennial Mountains WSA
- East Fork Blacktail Deer Creek WSA
- Hidden Pasture Creek WSA
- South half of the Blacktail Mountains WSA

Management Common to Alternatives B, C and D

Under all action alternatives (B, C, and D), the road and trail database would be updated and maintained to correct mapping errors and to refine decisions. Existing routes that are not included in the inventory base would be evaluated

on a case-by-case basis through an environmental assessment process to determine whether they should be open to public travel. In order to be considered an existing route, the route must be able to be verified to have been present on the ground no later than the 2002 inventory season. Existing routes determined to enhance public access opportunities and not in conflict with management of other resources could be designated open and added to the travel management map through routine plan maintenance. In accordance with existing regulations, based on monitoring, any of the route or area designations may be amended, revised, revoked, or other actions taken to achieve the objectives of resource protection and public safety, and to minimize conflicts among uses. Such closures and restrictions would be accomplished in accordance with 43 CFR Subpart 8364, and this plan maintained accordingly.

“New roads”, for the purposes of this discussion, means roads approved and constructed that do not presently exist but that are necessary for access to timber sales, mining activities, to provide general access, or to facilitate other authorized use of public lands. When wildlife displacement, habitat fragmentation, road density, or other resource issues are identified in regard to “new roads”, the road system would be managed to maintain no net change in “open” roads over the long term, with the baseline identified as the number of miles designated open in the selected alternative. In areas where no resource issues have been identified, management would not increase the number of “new roads” by more than 1% of the baseline over the life of the plan. Where a greater density of short term temporary roads would be necessary to support specific projects, new project roads and existing roads would be evaluated at project completion and, if necessary, designations changed to provide the most appropriate access routes in consideration of wildlife or other resource management needs. All other routes would be closed or reclaimed.

When considering both existing and new roads, management would strive to maintain an open road density not to exceed one mile per square mile to address identified resource issues within a project level cumulative effects area. Seasonal restrictions could also be used to mitigate resource concerns by reducing the open road density during periods of concern.

Routes on public lands that are not accessible to the general public (across private or other lands) would be closed to all recreational motorized wheeled vehicle travel except as provided in **Appendix I** (Off-Highway Vehicle Travel Exceptions and Allowances). Where no reasonable alternatives exist, access to private land using routes crossing public lands that are not designated open to public motorized use would be allowed to the degree necessary to provide for reasonable use and enjoyment of that property.

Access for people with disabilities under section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 would be considered on a case-by-case basis. In addition, specific areas may be identified annually to provide for disabled hunter access on existing routes where seasonal road closures restrict general public access beyond locked gates.

Alternative B

Route designations for motorized use under this alternative were primarily the result of a recommendation from the BLM’s Western Montana Resource Advisory Council (RAC) through work done by a sanctioned subgroup. The recommendations of the subgroup to the RAC, and finally to the BLM were based on a set of principles developed by the subgroup early in their process. These principles provided in **Appendix I** have been endorsed by the RAC, and have been used by the BLM in considering any modifications to the original recommendations to address public comments or other resource issues.

Under this alternative, wheeled motorized vehicle travel would be limited to designated routes throughout the planning area as indicated on **Maps 47 and 48 (oversized)**. Other management would include:

- No cross-country travel would be allowed except for:
 - (1) travel up to 300 feet from roads or trails for campsite selection. Site selection must be completed by nonmotorized means and accessed by the most direct route causing the least damage. This exception does not apply within the Lower Madison SRMA. Future area-specific planning and rule-making may also identify areas where this exception would not apply.
 - (2) Exceptions may be allowed for personal use permits such as firewood and Christmas tree cutting if specifically provided for on the permit, or identified as an area exception on the Southwest Montana Interagency Visitor/Travel Map.
 - (3) Specifically authorized activities for administrative purposes.
- Seasonal restrictions identified on the 1996 Southwest Montana Interagency Visitor/Travel would be carried forward, and affect all routes identified as open to public travel. These seasonal restrictions are also indicated on **Maps 47 and 48 (oversized)**.
- Game retrieval using motorized vehicles would be prohibited off designated routes.

826,876 acres would be managed as limited to designated routes for OHV use.

- 1,342 miles of road on BLM lands would be designated as open to public travel
- 159 miles of those roads designated open to travel would be subject to seasonal restrictions.

74,350 acres would be managed as closed to OHV use.

763,057 acres would be available for use by snowmobiles during some or all of the year. 138,169 acres would be closed to snowmobile use.

The following areas would be closed to snowmobile use as depicted on **Map 85**:

- Bear Trap Wilderness
- Centennial Mountains WSA
- East Fork Blacktail Deer Creek WSA
- Hidden Pasture Creek WSA
- Farlin Creek WSA
- Ruby Mountains WSA
- Blacktail Mountains WSA
- Bachelor Mountain area
- T15S, R9W, Section 1 (near East Creek, Lima Peaks area)

Alternative C

Wheeled motorized vehicle travel would be limited to designated routes throughout the planning area as indicated on **Maps 49 and 50**.

Other management would be the same as Alternative B except;

- All WSAs would be closed to snowmobile use, increasing the acres closed to snowmobile use from 78,402 to 143,547 acres (see **Map 46**)
- Certain areas would be closed seasonally to all human activity to benefit wildlife as depicted on **Map 49 (oversized)**.

807,981 acres would be managed as limited to designated routes for OHV use.

- 1,116 miles of road on BLM lands would be designated as open to public travel
- 247 miles of those roads designated open to travel would be subject to seasonal restrictions.

Due to additional areas closed to snowmobile use, 93,425 acres would be managed as closed to OHV use.

Alternative D

Wheeled motorized vehicle travel would be limited to roads existing and inventoried within the planning area, as indicated on **Maps 51 and 52 (oversized)**. Seasonal limitations and snowmobile use would be the same as Alternative B, except;

- Big game retrieval would also be allowed using restricted routes at times, and in areas, determined by the Interagency Travel Group.

854,250 acres would be managed as limited to designated routes for OHV use.

- 1,465 miles of road on BLM lands would be designated as open to public travel
- 216 miles of those roads designated open to travel would be subject to seasonal restrictions.

46,976 acres would be managed as closed to OHV use.

Table 8 summarizes the number of miles of road available for motorized travel by alternative as well as the acreage available for snowmobile use.

Table 8 Comparison by Alternative of Roads Available for Motorized Use and Snowmobile Areas				
	<i>Alt A</i>	<i>Alt B</i>	<i>Alt C</i>	<i>Alt D</i>
Miles of Road Available	2,102	1,342	1,116	1,465
Open Yearlong	1,860	1,183	869	1,249
Open Seasonally	242	159	247	216
Acres Open to Snowmobiles	822,284	763,057	757,699	822,284
Acres Closed to Snowmobiles	78,402	138,169	143,547	78,402

UTILITY AND COMMUNICATION CORRIDORS

Goal—Encourage the use of designated right-of-way corridors and use areas to the extent practical in order to minimize adverse environmental impacts and the proliferation of separate rights-of-way.

Refer to the *Lands and Realty* section for discussion on designation and management of utility and communication corridors and use areas.

FIRE MANAGEMENT AND ECOLOGY

WILDLAND FIRE

Goal – Provide the appropriate management response on all wildland fires, with an emphasis on firefighter and public safety. When assigning priorities, decisions will be based on relative values to be protected commensurate with fire management costs.

Management Common to All Alternatives

Under all alternatives, the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest and the DNRC would implement fire preparedness, prevention, and suppression on BLM land through the interagency offset and six party fire protection agreement. An aerial detection plan would continue to be implemented in cooperation with other fire management agencies in the area.

Beyond administration of the fire program as described above, the following resource provisions would be applied across all alternatives:

- Use of retardant in Wilderness Areas or Wilderness Study Areas (WSA) would be avoided and would require line officer approval.
- Use of heavy equipment would be restricted to areas outside of Wilderness or WSAs.
- Minimum Impact Suppression Tactics would be used when working in WSAs or Wilderness areas, following the Interim Management Policy and Guidelines for Lands under Wilderness Review (H-8550-1).
- Manage naturally ignited wildland fires in the Bear Trap Unit of the Lee Metcalf Wilderness Area under the prescription guidelines established in the Bear Trap Unit of the Lee Metcalf Wilderness Area Fire Management Plan.
- Fire management activities are prioritized by their risk to life and property across the planning area. Fires that

are adjacent or near wildland urban interface will have the highest priority for fire suppression.

Alternative A

Under this alternative, current direction outlined for fire management in the planning area in the 1984 Fire Management Plan would continue to be implemented. The 1984 fire management plan provides programmatic direction for fire suppression and fuels management, and addresses three components including wildland fire pre-suppression, suppression, and prescribed fire. Two strategies—confine and control—would be applied in continuing to implement the 1984 plan. Approximately 60 percent of the field office is within a confine strategy, which considers management of fire prior to implementing full suppression. Except for the Bear Trap Unit of the Lee Metcalf Wilderness Area, the remainder of the area has a control strategy where immediate action would be taken to suppress a fire within the first burning period.

Management under Alternatives B, C and D

Under the action alternatives, the planning area would be divided into 17 geographical Fire Management Zones (FMZs) as described in **Appendix J** and depicted on **Map 53**. One of the four fire management categories established and defined in current planning guidance (Appendix C of BLM 1601 Planning Handbook) and described below would be assigned to each of the 17 geographic fire management zones. **Table 9** summarizes the category assignments by FMZ and alternative.

DESCRIPTION OF FIRE MANAGEMENT CATEGORIES

The four categories described below address the desirability of both wildland fire and prescribed fire based on resource and social conditions. These categories provide direction for the FMZs in Alternatives B, C, and D.

Category A Areas

Wildland fire is not desired in these areas. The fire management emphasis should be placed on prevention, detection, rapid response, use of appropriate suppression techniques and tools, and non-fire fuels treatment. Fire suppression may be required to prevent unacceptable resource damage or to prevent loss of life and property. Emphasis should be focused on those actions that will reduce unwanted ignitions and reduce losses from unwanted wildland fires.

Category B Areas

Areas where unplanned fire is likely to cause negative effects, but these effects can be mitigated or avoided

Table 9
Dillon Field Office Fire Management Zones and
Wildfire Management Categories by Alternative

<i>FMZ</i>	<i>Alternative A</i>	<i>Alternative B</i>	<i>Alternative C</i>	<i>Alternative D</i>
Beaverhead/Jefferson and Madison Valley	Guidance from 1984 FMP.	Category A	Category A	Category A
Beaverhead Mountains		Category B	Category B	Category A
Big Sheep/Medicine Lodge		Category B	Category D	Category B
Back Country Byway				
Centennial		Category C	Category D	Category C
Blacktail Mountains		Category C	Category D	Category C
Tendoy Mountains		Category C	Category D	Category C
Blacktail/Horse Prairie		Category C	Category D	Category B
Sweetwater/Ruby		Category C	Category D	Category B
Tobacco Root Mountains		Category C	Category C	Category A
Gravelly Mountains		Category C	Category C	Category B
East Madison		Category C	Category D	Category C
SE Foothills/Pioneers		Category C	Category D	Category B
McCartney/Rochester		Category C	Category D	Category B
Big Hole River Corridor		Category C	Category C	Category B
North Rubys		Category D	Category D	Category C

through fuels management (e.g., prescribed fire), prevention of human caused fire, or other strategies. Emphasize prevention/mitigation programs that reduce unwanted fire ignitions and resource threats. For unplanned wildfire, suppression is the objective for this category. Fire and non-fire fuels treatments are utilized to reduce the effects of unplanned wildfire. Restorative treatments may consist of multiple non-fire treatments before the use of fire will be considered.

Category C Areas

Areas where fire is desired to manage ecosystems but there are significant constraints that must be considered for its use. These constraints could include critical wildlife habitat, air quality or T&E species. Resource considerations could be described in terms of maximum acreage, time of year or as burned acres per decade from all types of fire. These areas would receive lower suppression priority in multiple wildfire situations. Fire and non-fire fuels treatments may be utilized to ensure constraints are met or to reduce any hazardous effects of unplanned wildfire.

Category D Areas

Areas where fire is desired, and where there are no constraints associated with resource conditions or social,

economic, or political considerations (i.e., where natural and management-ignited fire may be used to achieve desired objectives, such as to improve vegetation or watershed condition). These areas offer the greatest opportunity to take advantage of the full range of options available for managing wildfire under the appropriate management response.

Alternative B

This alternative maintains the direction provided in the BLM Statewide Fire Management Plan/ Environmental Assessment Plan Amendment for Montana and the Dakotas (USDI-BLM 2003b). Under this alternative 37,573 acres would be managed under Category A, 72,867 acres under Category B, 776,925 acres under Category C, and 13,665 acres under Category D. [Map 54](#) shows the location of these category assignments under Alternative B.

Alternative C

This alternative places a priority emphasis on allowing natural fire to be used for resource benefits, while providing an appropriate management response emphasizing initial attack, full suppression only to protect human life, and other

federal, state, private property, and areas such as threatened and endangered habitat and cultural sites. Under this alternative there would be a dramatic shift of acres in Category C to Category D, with 37,573 acres under Category A, 26,728 acres under Category B, 70,296 acres under Category C, and 766,433 acres under Category D. [Map 55](#) shows the location of these category assignments under Alternative C.

When fire can achieve resource benefits, management would consider confining the spread of wildland fire by employing direct and indirect actions and using natural and human made barriers such as topographic features or roads.

Alternative D

Under this alternative 93,152 acres would be managed under Category A, 581,383 acres under Category B, and 226,669 acres under Category C. No areas within the Dillon Field Office would be managed under Category D. [Map 56](#) shows the location of these category assignments under Alternative D.

This alternative would emphasize initial attack and full suppression on all wildland fires that threaten high values at risk, and other federal, state, or private property. Natural or human created barriers would be used as available for control lines outside of those areas that do not have high values at risk. During the times when multiple ignitions occur, suppression resources would place top priority on the highest values at risk such as communities, municipal watersheds etc. This alternative does not allow for wildland fire to be used for resource benefits, except for the Bear Trap Wilderness area managed provisions in the plan prepared for that area as described in Management Common to All Alternatives. [Table 10](#) compares the number of acres of BLM in each fire category by alternative.

Table 10 Summary Comparison of BLM Acres in each Fire Category by Alternative				
	<i>Alt A</i>	<i>Alt B</i>	<i>Alt C</i>	<i>Alt D</i>
Category A	N/A	37,573	37,573	93,152
Category B	N/A	72,867	26,728	581,383
Category C	N/A	776,925	70,296	226,669
Category D	N/A	13,665	766,433	0

PRESCRIBED FIRE

Goal – Restore and maintain desired ecological conditions and fuel loadings through use of prescribed fire, wildland fire, and other treatment methods.

Management Common to All Alternatives

Under all alternatives, priority would be placed on fuels reduction in wildland urban interface areas. Treatments would be prioritized based on comparing historical fire regimes and current fire severity.

Management would focus on maintaining fire dependent ecosystems and restoring those outside their natural balance through mechanical, chemical, and prescribed fire treatments.

Alternative A

Under continuation of current management, prescribed fire would be considered across the planning area and analyzed on a case-by-case basis in consideration of all other resource values and management objectives.

Alternative B

Under this alternative, prescribed fire as well as mechanical treatments would focus on conifer encroachment in the non-forest habitat types, aspen restoration, and on post-harvest treatment in timber harvest areas (see *Vegetation* sections for *Rangelands* and *Forest and Woodlands*). There would be limited opportunity under Alternative B to use wildland fire to treat forest and non-forest habitat types for resource benefits. However, if the use of prescribed burning is analyzed and is determined to be a tool to enhance wilderness values, prescribed fire could be used to restore fire as a disturbance process within WSAs. Within WSAs, use of prescribed fire and associated tools would be limited to those circumstances where the area's historical fire regime could be determined and where natural ignition wild-fires could play a more natural role in the WSA.

Alternative C

Under this alternative, prescribed fire would be used to restore aspen, and as a post-harvest treatment in timber harvested areas (see *Vegetation—Forest and Woodlands* section). Use of wildland fire use for resource benefits would be emphasized under this alternative to meet resource objectives in the forest and non-forested habitat types.

Alternative D

This alternative is similar to Alternative B, except there would be no opportunity to use wildland fire to treat forest and non-forest habitat types for resource benefits.

FIRE REHABILITATION

Goal – Use rehabilitation to mitigate the adverse effects of fire on the soil, vegetation, and water resources in a cost effective manner.

Management Common to All Alternatives

Under all alternatives, BLM would use the BLM's Emergency Fire Rehabilitation Handbook (H-1742-1) which outlines the process for implementing emergency fire rehabilitation projects following wildland fires and wildland fire use. Emergency fire rehabilitation funds may be used to:

- Protect life, property, and soil, water, and vegetation resources.
- Prevent unacceptable onsite or offsite damage.
- Facilitate meeting land use plan objectives and other Federal laws.
- Reduce the invasion and establishment of undesirable or invasive vegetation species.

Alternative A

Emergency fire rehabilitation activities would be implemented on a case-by-case basis. A separate environmental analysis would be completed for each emergency fire rehabilitation project.

Alternative B

Emergency fire rehabilitation activities would be implemented after wildland fire. Emergency fire rehabilitation funds may be available for rehabilitation after wildland fire use, depending on the situation. Direction provided in **Appendix J** would be used to implement emergency fire rehabilitation projects across the planning area. Separate environmental analysis would only be completed for emergency fire rehabilitation projects that are outside the scope of activities described in **Appendix J**.

Alternative C

Same as Alternative B and D, except that no livestock grazing would occur for two (2) years after a fire, followed by no growing season livestock grazing for the next 3 years.

Alternative D

Same as Alternative B.

SPECIAL DESIGNATIONS

AREAS OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

Goal – Protect relevant and important values through ACEC designation and apply special management where standard or routine management is not adequate to protect the values from risks or threats of damage/degradation or to provide for public safety from natural hazards.

Management is described below for each of the thirteen (13) Potential ACECs to meet the above-stated goal. When special management is necessary under an alternative to protect identified relevant and important values, the ACEC is proposed for designation. Where management proposed throughout the alternative will serve to protect or enhance the identified relevant and important values, no designation is proposed. Information on the relevance and importance evaluations of the 63 ACEC nominations reviewed in this planning process is summarized in Chapter 3 and in **Appendix K**. The general location of all 13 Potential ACECs is shown on **Map 57**. Detailed locations and boundaries are shown for each individual Potential ACEC on **Maps 58 through 70**.

Along with implementation of the special management described for the ACECs proposed for designation, actions within any designated ACECs would be reviewed during activity level planning to ensure relevant and important values are protected. Plans of operation would be required when mineral activities are proposed in accordance with regulations at 43 CFR 3809. Designated ACECs and the relevant and important values therein would be monitored over the life of the plan. Relevant and important values in the areas not proposed for ACEC designation would be managed as outlined in each respective resource or program section.

Alternative A

No ACECs would be designated under the continuation of current management. Management of each of the 13 potential ACECs would continue as at present and uses would be evaluated on a case-by-case basis with changes implemented to protect relevant and important values when actions are proposed within the boundaries of potential ACECs.

Alternative B

Special management beyond management provided by Alternative B is required to protect relevant and important values within eight (8) of the 13 potential ACECs, encompassing a total of 73,184 acres as shown on [Map 71](#). This management includes:

- **Beaverhead Rock (120 acres)**
New right-of-ways would be prohibited in the area and 120 acres would be withdrawn from mineral entry. The area would be retained by BLM; transfer of these lands from federal ownership would only be considered if the State of Montana applied for a conveyance under the Recreation and Public Purposes Act in order to manage these lands in concert with the adjacent primitive park administered by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks.
 - **Block Mountain (8,661 acres)**
Special considerations for any land use authorizations and evaluation of the density and placement of any proposed facilities to protect the integrity of geologic features would be implemented. Permits would be required for educational uses within the ACEC. Educational materials describing access and features of the area and appropriate use protocols would be developed. All mineral uses would be allowed in the area, with review to identify and mitigate impacts to important features in the area, and other uses such as livestock grazing would continue as currently authorized.
 - **Blue Lake (430 acres)**
Activities contributing to nutrient enrichment or increased water temperature would not be authorized within this area. Barriers to prevent unauthorized travel into the area would be placed or constructed and no surface occupancy would be required for mineral leasing. Livestock grazing would be eliminated under standard management of this alternative. Interpretive materials about the axolotl would be developed at appropriate locations to inform the public of this special value.
 - **Centennial Mountains (40,715 acres)**
Landscape design principles would be incorporated into any vegetation treatment. No new permanent roads would be allowed in the area to maintain current unfragmented habitat for wildlife migration. Any proposed winter recreational use would be evaluated, and any associated backcountry helicopter operations could be denied, depending on the evaluation. Livestock use would continue based on existing permit stipulations and approved allotment management plans. Any proposed changes in grazing, including time and intensity of use, would be evaluated for impacts on the relevant and important values and would be permitted if the values would be maintained or enhanced. However, grazing permits could not be converted from cattle to sheep.
 - **Centennial Sandhills (1,040 acres)**
Disturbances (for example fire or short duration high intensity grazing) would be implemented to maintain the unique habitat within the sandhills area. Use of non-mechanical disturbances would be preferred, but if not working, mechanical disturbances could be employed. Inventory, monitoring and research studies would be continued. No aerial application of herbicides and pesticides would be authorized within the ACEC boundary, but other weed control methods could be used. Standard management provisions would include restrictions on mineral material sites, and no surface occupancy for mineral leasing within 1/4 mile of special status plants. Vehicular travel would be limited in the area to roads and trails designated as open in Alternative B.
 - **Everson Creek (8,608 acres)**
Approximately 2160 acres would be withdrawn from locatable mineral entry and any land use authorizations would be evaluated to mitigate surface and visual intrusions into the area. New road construction would not be allowed within the area unless it avoided all cultural resources and would be reclaimed to original contour.
 - **Muddy Creek/Big Sheep Creek (13,097 acres)**
A portion of the area within the potential ACEC boundary (13,097 of 22,829 acres) would be designated as an ACEC. This area would not be withdrawn from mineral entry but plans of operation would be required for locatable minerals and special provisions to protect cultural resources and scenic values would be specified during project activities.
 - **Virginia City Historic District (513 acres)**
Withdraw the area from locatable mineral entry and examine current claims to determine validity when mining proposals may impact historic resources or the landscape. The area would be retained by BLM; transfer of these lands from federal ownership would only be considered if the State of Montana applied for a conveyance under the Recreation and Public Purposes Act in order to manage these lands in concert with their other historic properties in the Virginia City area.
- Relevant and important values in the remaining five (5) potential ACECs not proposed for designation would be protected and managed under standard provisions identified throughout Alternative B.
- Riparian and wetland values and associated special status plant communities in the Big Sheep Creek Basin area would be protected through implementation of the *Western Montana Standards for Rangeland Health*, in particular Standard #2 (Riparian and wetland areas are in proper function-

ing condition) and #5 (Provide habitat as necessary to maintain a viable and diverse population of native plant and animal species, including special status species). Update and revision of the Sheep Creek Aquatic Habitat Management Plan as identified in Alternative B and completion of the watershed assessment in the area will also provide for management to protect and enhance the condition of the riparian and wetlands in the area which would also provide additional protection for the sensitive plant populations associated with them. Herbicide application according to label directions requires avoidance of riparian and wetland areas. Aerial spray proposals under standard management would require evaluation to determine if the weed control method would be detrimental to the special status species plant communities. Standard management also provides the ability to consider the reintroduction of beaver in coordination with FWP.

Standard management of wetland values in the Centennial Valley area provides for maintenance of residual wetland vegetation and the potential to pursue water leasing in coordination with FWP. Paleontological values would be protected under standard management protocols under the goal of *“Preserve and protect significant resources and ensure that they are available for appropriate uses by present and future generations.”* Standard management in the plan to restrict travel to designated routes will assist in decreasing impacts caused by vehicles traveling over resources as well as help in limiting vandalism.

Ferruginous hawk nesting areas would also be protected through standard management proposed in Alternative B. This would include consideration of the special status species and its habitat using the standard protocols identified in Appendix D when projects are proposed. During project planning and site specific analysis, sustained activities within 1/2 mile of nest sites from March 1 through September 1 would be evaluated for potential disturbance during the breeding season, and if necessary adjusted. Nesting structures would be protected, sagebrush/grassland interspersions would be maintained, and prey abundance would be enhanced (see **Table 12** provisions under Special Status Species).

Standard management directed to the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail includes a goal in the *National Trails* section to *“Assist in cooperative efforts to manage current and future national trails to protect the values for which they were designated.”* The Lewis and Clark Trail is already afforded a higher degree of consideration as a designated National Historic Trail when activities are proposed on BLM-administered lands. Areas along the Lewis and Clark Trail have been placed in Visual Resource Management Category III under Alternative B rather than in Category IV (as in Alternative A), which should assist in preserving the integrity of the viewshed. Under standard management, impacts to the trail from project-level activities

are also considered as a result of the standard cultural resource review and consultation process. In addition, a No Surface Occupancy stipulation would be applied on 1/2 mile either side of the trail (with no exceptions) when leasing for oil and gas to protect visual qualities.

Under Alternative B, westslope cutthroat trout habitats with purity of 99 percent or greater receive priority attention under standard management provisions. BLM would continue to participate in the implementation of the MOU and Conservation Agreement for Westslope Cutthroat Trout in Montana. Mineral exploration or development proposed in streams with purity of 90 percent or greater would be subject to bonding and restoration provisions and water leasing would be pursued in coordination with FWP. Oil and gas stipulations would require No Surface Occupancy within one-half mile of streams with 99 percent or greater purity, and Controlled Surface Use provisions on streams less than 99 percent pure. All other project proposals would include consideration of the special status species and its habitat using the standard protocols identified in Appendix D. Concentrated spawning areas would be protected in streams with purity of 99 percent or greater, and habitat improvement projects would be implemented where concerns with habitat are identified, with a focus on increasing large woody debris where it is appropriate for the site. All of these provisions should serve to protect and enhance westslope cutthroat trout habitats even though an ACEC is not designated.

Alternative C

Special management beyond management provided in Alternative C is required to protect relevant and important values within two (2) of the 13 potential ACECs, encompassing 9,701 acres as shown on **Map 72**. This management includes:

- Block Mountain (8,661 acres)
Same as Alternative B
- Centennial Sandhills (1,040 acres)
Same as Alternative B

Relevant and important values in the remaining eleven (11) potential ACECs not proposed for designation would be protected and managed under standard provisions identified throughout Alternative C.

Alternative D

Special management beyond management provided in Alternative D is required to protect relevant and important values within all 13 of the potential ACECs, encompassing a total of 227,067 acres as shown on **Map 73**. This management includes:

- Beaverhead Rock (120 acres)
Same as Alternative B
- Big Sheep Creek Basin (2,393 acres within overall 25,990 acre area)
Aerial spraying of herbicides and pesticides would be prohibited in this area to protect sensitive plants and habitats. An intensive wetland management strategy would be developed to enhance and protect isolated wetlands and sensitive plant populations.
- Block Mountain (8,661 acres)
Same as Alternative B.
- Blue Lake (430 acres)
Same as Alternative B.
- Centennial Mountains (40,715 acres)
Same as Alternative B
- Centennial Sandhills (1,040 acres)
Same as Alternative B, but also prohibit aerial weed spraying and implement a spot-spray only weed control program when using herbicides. The area would be retained by BLM unless opportunities to transfer these lands to the USFWS for management in conjunction with adjacent habitats became available.
- Centennial Valley Wetlands (17,388 acres)
Authorized uses would be managed to provide a minimum of 12-inch residual tall emergent wetland vegetation within the area. Water leasing would be coordinated with FWP to maintain surface water and wetlands within the ACEC area.
- Everson Creek (8,608 acres)
The area would be withdrawn from locatable mineral entry and new land use authorizations would be evaluated to mitigate surface and visual intrusions in the area.
- Ferruginous Hawk Nesting Area (114,300 acres)
Evaluate land use authorizations and restrict uses between March 1 and September 1 where necessary to protect nesting. Livestock use would continue based on existing permit stipulations and approved allotment management plans. Any proposed changes in grazing, including time and intensity of use, would be evaluated for impacts on ferruginous hawk nesting and would be permitted if the values would be maintained or enhanced. Any vegetation treatments in the area would be conducted in a manner that would maintain the mammal prey base.
- Lewis & Clark Trail (8,136 acres; 16 miles)
Stipulations would be applied to new proposed uses or development on public land along the trail to protect the visual integrity of the viewshed to the extent possible, especially along the Horse Prairie segment.
- Muddy Creek/Big Sheep Creek (22,829 acres)
Management would be applied to prevent impacts to scenic qualities and to cultural resources and deposits.
- Virginia City Historic District (513 acres)
Same as Alternative B
- Westslope Cutthroat Trout Habitats (1,934 acres; 74 miles)
Implement management or habitat improvements to increase woody debris and protect spawning areas. Explore opportunities for water leasing in coordination with FWP. Apply special provisions under a plan of operations to address concerns with locatable mineral entry.

Table 11 identifies whether or not a potential ACEC is designated within the alternative.

Table 11 Potential ACEC Designations by Alternative				
<i>Potential ACEC</i>	<i>Alt A</i>	<i>Alt B</i>	<i>Alt C</i>	<i>Alt D</i>
Beaverhead Rock	NO	YES	NO	YES
Big Sheep Creek Basin	NO	NO	NO	YES
Block Mountain	NO	YES	YES	YES
Blue Lake	NO	YES	NO	YES
Centennial Mountains	NO	YES	NO	YES
Centennial Sandhills	NO	YES	YES	YES
Centennial Valley Wetlands	NO	NO	NO	YES
Everson Creek	NO	YES	NO	YES
Ferruginous Hawk Nesting Area	NO	NO	NO	YES
Lewis and Clark Trail	NO	NO	NO	YES
Muddy Creek/Big Sheep Creek	NO	YES (portion)	NO	YES (all)
Virginia City Historic District	NO	YES	NO	YES
Westslope Cutthroat Trout Habitats	NO	NO	NO	YES

BACK COUNTRY BYWAYS

Goal – Highlight and interpret scenic, historic, archaeological or other interest values associated with Back Country Byways in partnership with communities, interest groups, and state and federal agencies.

Management Common to All Alternatives except C

Designation of the Big Sheep Creek National Back Country Byway (approximately 50 miles) would continue under Alternatives A, B, and D. [Map 74](#) shows existing special designations in the planning area, including the Big Sheep Creek National Back Country Byway. The plan developed for the Byway would be implemented, with additional emphasis placed on coordinating with local residents in that area to develop information and interpretive materials for visitors to the byway that highlight multiple uses of public lands and land stewardship in the area.

Alternative C

BLM would no longer designate the county road through Big Sheep Creek and the Medicine Lodge area as a Back Country Byway and references to the route would be removed from travel and tourism publications whenever possible.

NATIONAL RECREATION AREAS

No National Recreation Areas are located within the planning area.

NATIONAL TRAILS

Goal – Assist in cooperative efforts to manage current and future national trails to protect the values for which they were designated.

Management Common to All Alternatives

The Congressionally-designated Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDT) would continue to be managed under the presumption that the BLM has the authority to manage the trail across the ARS and USFS lands from Red Rock Pass to the divide between Ching and Odell Creeks. An agreement between the agencies would be formalized regarding specific areas of responsibility for trail segments along the CDT. Construction, maintenance and management of the CDT would be the highest priority for trail work in the planning area, along with the Bear Trap Canyon National Recreation Trail. Both of these National Trails would be managed to preserve the surrounding scenic values and opportunities for primitive recreation opportunities.

Portions of the Lewis and Clark and Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trails crossing lands administered by the DFO would be managed to protect and enhance their respective historic values, with interpretative opportunities considered on a case-by-case basis. Management under all alternatives would follow BLM manual guidance, the National BLM Programmatic Agreement and implementing protocol for Montana, and the Comprehensive Plan for the Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail (USDA-FS 1990).

WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS

Goal – Identify river segments suitable for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System.

Recommendations on suitability for the eight rivers/river segments found eligible for further study under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act are described below by alternative. [Map 75](#) illustrates the location of these eligible river segments in the planning area. Information on the inventory and eligibility review conducted in this planning process is detailed in two reports prepared by BLM (USDI-BLM 2002c, USDI-BLM 2002d). [Appendix L](#) describes considerations used in the suitability study.

Management Common to All Alternatives

In cooperation with other federal and non-federal agencies and local and county governments and special interest groups, management objectives to protect and enhance the outstandingly remarkable values identified on each segment would be applied.

Alternative A

Under continuation of current management, a suitability study of the eight (8) eligible river segments determined eligible for further study would not be completed and protective management would continue indefinitely on all eight river segments (106.67 miles) depicted on [Map 75](#).

Eligible rivers include:

- Bear Creek
- Beaverhead River
- Big Hole River (2 segments)
- Big Sheep Creek
- Madison River (3 segments)

Protective management would be subject to valid existing rights and to actions within BLM's authority. A case-by-case review of proposed actions with resulting action or mitigation would be completed to assure that Wild and Scenic River eligibility and tentative classification would not be affected. Protective management objectives include:

- free-flow characteristics cannot be modified by stream impoundments, diversions, channelization, and/or rip-rapping
- each segment would be managed to protect identified outstandingly remarkable values, and to the extent practicable such values would be enhanced
- development of the eligible river and its corridor cannot be modified to the extent that the eligibility or tentative classification would be affected

Alternative B

Under Alternative B, none of the eight (8) eligible river segments (106.67 miles) would be recommended as suitable for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The river segments and associated corridors would be managed in accordance with the prescriptions described throughout Alternative B rather than under the protective management objectives for eligible or suitable rivers.

Alternative C

Under Alternative C, all eight (8) eligible river segments (106.67 miles) would be recommended as suitable for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act provides guidance for management of study rivers until designated by Congress or released to multiple use. The following protective management objectives would continue on suitable segments:

- free-flowing characteristics would not be modified by stream impoundments, diversion, or rip-rapping
- each segment would be managed to protect identified outstandingly remarkable values, and to the extent practicable such values would be enhanced
- development of the suitable river and its corridor cannot be modified to the degree that its tentative classification would be affected.

Protective management would be subject to valid existing rights and limited to actions within BLM's authority. Wild and Scenic River management guidelines are described in general in **Appendix L**.

Alternative D

Same as Alternative B.

WILDERNESS (BLM Critical Element)

Goal – Manage designated wilderness areas for the preservation of natural conditions and processes, and to provide opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.

Management Common to All Alternatives

Under all alternatives, the 6,347 acres of designated wilderness within the Bear Trap Unit of the Lee Metcalf Wilderness would be managed according to direction provided by the BLM Manual H-8560-1, *Management of Designated Wilderness Areas* (USDI-BLM 1988) and *Wilderness Management Plan for Bear Trap Canyon Unit of Lee Metcalf Wilderness* (USDI-BLM 1984b). Monitoring would be conducted and direction found in *Limits of Acceptable Change Management Direction, Bear Trap Canyon Unit* (USDI-BLM 1991c) applied. Updated versions of the wilderness management plan and the LAC management direction would be applied as they are completed.

WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS

Goal – Manage wilderness study areas (WSAs) so as not to impair their suitability for preservation as wilderness until such time as Congress either designates them as wilderness or releases them from further study.

Management Common to All Alternatives

The Farlin Creek WSA studied under Section 202 of FLPMA and recommended to the President as part of the Section 603 Wilderness Review process, would continue to be managed according to the Interim Management Policy as well as all WSAs studied under Section 603 of FLPMA until such time as Congress either designates them as wilderness or releases them from further consideration as wilderness. Those areas designated wilderness by Congress would be managed according to a wilderness management plan written specifically for that area. Those areas released from further consideration as wilderness would be managed consistent with surrounding lands and prescriptions identified below in the land use plan alternatives. Release management is described under each alternative below and synopsized in **Appendix M**.

Under all alternatives the East Fork of Blacktail Deer Creek WSA (MT-076-007) would be managed as follows if released from wilderness study status:

The entire East Fork Blacktail Deer Creek WSA would continue to be managed to **emphasize** semi-primitive, non-motorized recreation opportunities, and to maintain the scenic values. Recreation management activities would emphasize minimizing the impacts of intensive horseback/camping pressure which occurs during most big game hunting seasons. Management would emphasize restoration and maintenance of natural processes and conditions when considering the appropriateness of other resource uses. The VRM Class for this area would be modified to Class II in order to manage for the long-term maintenance of the scenic values

in this area. No surface occupancy would be stipulated for any oil and gas leasing.

Alternative A

Under Alternative A, the Tobacco Root Tack-on WSA would continue to be managed under the Interim Management Policy unless released by Congress or designated as wilderness.

Management Common to Alternatives B, C and D

Under Alternatives B, C and D, the 860 acres of public land within the Tobacco Root Tack-on WSA studied under Section 202 would be released from further consideration as wilderness because it is too small to be considered for wilderness on its own, and no longer complements management of adjacent lands since the Deerlodge National Forest identified management of their adjacent lands to provide for high quality motorized recreation opportunities.

The area would be managed consistent with adjacent lands and in consideration of other land use plan provisions.

Alternative B

The East Fork of Blacktail Deer Creek and the Tobacco Root Tack-on would be managed as outlined under the management common sections above. In the event any or all of the remaining WSAs would be released during the life of the plan, the following management would be applied under this alternative:

AXOLOTL LAKES - MT-076-069

Axolotl Lakes WSA would continue to be managed to **emphasize** semi-primitive, non-motorized **summer recreation opportunities**, **motorized and non-motorized winter use**, and to maintain the scenic values. Management would emphasize restoration and maintenance of natural processes and conditions when considering the appropriateness of other resource uses. The VRM Class for this area would be modified to Class II in order to manage for the long-term maintenance of the scenic values in this area. NSO for oil and gas.

BELL-LIMEKILN CANYON - MT-076-026

The entire Bell/Limekiln Canyons WSA would continue to be managed to **emphasize** semi-primitive, non-motorized recreation opportunities, and to maintain the scenic values. Management would emphasize restoration and maintenance of natural processes and conditions when considering the appropriateness of other resource uses. The VRM Class for this area would be modified to Class II in order to manage for the long-term maintenance of the scenic values in this area.

BLACKTAIL MOUNTAINS - MT-076-002

The entire Blacktail Mountains WSA would continue to be managed to **emphasize** semi-primitive, non-motorized recreation opportunities, and to maintain the scenic values. Management would emphasize restoration and maintenance of natural processes and conditions when considering the appropriateness of other resource uses. The VRM Class for this area would be modified to Class II in order to manage for the long-term maintenance of the scenic values in this area. Oil and gas leasing would be stipulated No Surface Occupancy.

CENTENNIAL MOUNTAINS - MT-ISA-002

The entire Centennial Mountains WSA would continue to be managed within the Centennial Mountains SRMA to **emphasize** semi-primitive, non-motorized recreation opportunities, and to maintain the scenic values. Management would emphasize restoration and maintenance of natural processes and conditions when considering the appropriateness of other resource uses. The entire WSA would be maintained in the Retention Category under the Realty program (Category 1). The VRM Class for this area would be modified to Class II in order to manage for the long-term maintenance of the scenic values in this area.

FARLIN CREEK - MT-076-034

Should all or part of the Farlin Creek WSA be released from further consideration as wilderness, it would continue to be managed to **emphasize** semi-primitive non-motorized recreation opportunities and to maintain scenic values.

HENNEBERRY RIDGE - MT-076-028

The Henneberry Ridge WSA would be included within the Rocky Hills SRMA. Opportunities for mountain bike and hiking use would be emphasized in development of a Recreation Area Management Plan for the area.

HIDDEN CREEK PASTURE - MT-076-022

The entire Hidden Creek WSA would continue to be managed to **emphasize** semi-primitive, non-motorized recreation opportunities. The VRM Class for this area would be modified to Class III, consistent with the surrounding lands. A portion of the WSA bordering Big Sheep Creek would be maintained in the Retention Category under the Lands and Realty program (Category 1).

RUBY MOUNTAINS - MT-076-001

The entire area would be managed as a Special Recreation Management Area to **emphasize** opportunities for semi-primitive, non-motorized recreation. That portion of the WSA which is currently recommended for wilderness designation would continue to be managed to **emphasize** semi-primitive, non-motorized recreation opportunities, and to maintain the scenic values. This portion of the WSA would be maintained in the Retention Category under the Lands and Realty program (Category 1). Management would emphasize restoration and maintenance of natural processes

and conditions when considering the appropriateness of other resource uses. The VRM Class for this area would be modified to Class II in order to manage for the long-term maintenance of the scenic values in this area. The area would be stipulated No Surface Occupancy for oil and gas leasing.

Management of the southern portion of this WSA (10,996 acres) would allow for greater emphasis on other resource uses such as commercial timber harvest and livestock grazing, but would still seek to maintain the overall natural appearance of the landscape. Motorized vehicle use would continue to be allowed on designated routes only.

Alternative C

Management would be the same as described under Alternative B for any areas released from Wilderness Study status.

Alternative D

The following management would be applied under Alternative D in the event WSAs would be released during the life of the plan. The East Fork of Blacktail Deer Creek and Tobacco Root Tack-Ons would be managed as described under the management common sections.

AXOLOTL LAKES - MT-076-069

Axolotl Lakes WSA would be managed to **emphasize** both motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities, and to maintain the scenic values in the area immediately surrounding the lakes. Management would emphasize accommodating recreational uses while allowing for moderate development of potential timber and mineral resources. The VRM Class for this area would be modified to Class II in the lakes area and Class III in the western portion in order to balance preservation of scenic values with development of other resources.

BELL/LIMEKILN CANYON - MT-076-026

Same as Alternatives B and C.

BLACKTAIL MOUNTAINS - MT-076-002

The south end of the WSA (that portion not currently recommended for wilderness designation) would be managed to accommodate continued recreational use while allowing for development of the potential timber and mineral resources. This portion of the WSA would be modified to VRM Class III to allow for moderate levels of consumptive or developmental resources.

CENTENNIAL MOUNTAINS - MT-ISA-002

The entire area would be managed as an SRMA. The eastern portion of the Centennial Mountains WSA would continue to be managed to **emphasize** semi-primitive, non-mo-

torized recreation opportunities, and to maintain the scenic values. Management would emphasize restoration and maintenance of natural processes and conditions when considering the appropriateness of other resource uses. The entire WSA would be maintained in the Retention Category under the Realty program (Category 1). The VRM Class for this area would be modified to Class II in order to manage for the long-term maintenance of the scenic values in this area.

The western portion of the WSA (west of Matsingale Creek) would be managed to accommodate a variety of recreational uses and allow for development of timber and mineral resources. The VRM Class for this area would be modified to Class III to allow for development of these resources.

FARLIN CREEK - MT-076-034

Should all or part of the Farlin Creek WSA be released from further consideration as wilderness, it would continue to be managed to allow for continued recreational use while accommodating development of the timber and mineral resources.

HENNEBERRY RIDGE - MT-076-028

Same as Alternatives B and C.

HIDDEN CREEK PASTURE - MT-076-022

The entire Hidden Pasture Creek WSA would be managed to **emphasize** both motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities. The VRM Class for this area would be modified to Class III, consistent with the surrounding lands.

RUBY MOUNTAINS - MT-076-001

The entire area would be managed as a Special Recreation Management Area to recognize the value of available recreation opportunities.

That portion of the WSA which is currently recommended for wilderness designation would continue to be managed to **emphasize** semi-primitive, non-motorized recreation opportunities. This portion of the WSA would be maintained in the Retention Category under the Realty program (Category 1). Management would strive to maintain quality recreational opportunities while accommodating other resource uses. The VRM Class for this area would be modified to Class III in order to allow for moderate levels of consumptive or developmental resource uses.

Management of the southern portion of this WSA (10,996 acres) would allow for greater emphasis on other resource uses such as commercial timber harvest and livestock grazing.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

ECONOMICS

Goal – Provide for a diverse array of stable economic opportunities in an environmentally sound manner.

Management Common to All Alternatives

In accordance with provisions of NEPA and other guiding statutes, impacts would be evaluated and disclosed as part of project level planning when it appears actions taken by the BLM DFO have the potential to affect economic conditions.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE (BLM Critical Element)

Goal – Identify and remediate to the extent possible disproportionate negative effects to minority or low income populations per Executive Order 12898—“Federal Action to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations”.

Management Common to All Alternatives

Under all alternatives, BLM would evaluate and disclose whether actions would place a disproportionate share of negative environmental consequences on any particular populations covered by the Executive Order, and where practical, avoid such consequences.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Abandoned Mine Lands

Goal – Protect humans and the environment from exposure to abandoned mine lands while considering associated resource values such as historic resources.

Management Common to All Alternatives

Inventory efforts would continue to refine and update the inventory of abandoned mine sites on public lands in the planning area. Reclamation of abandoned mine lands across the planning area would be prioritized based on the degree of threat to human health, the environment, and public safety. Emphasis would be placed on those areas present serious threats to the environment, especially to water quality, and

those that pose safety risks to the public. Any reclamation would be conducted in accordance with the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan, following project level planning and analysis under NEPA and other pertinent laws.

Debris Flows

No goal or alternatives were developed given the unlikely occurrence on public lands in this planning area.

Hazardous Materials

Goal – Protect humans and the environment from exposure to hazardous materials.

Management Common to All Alternatives

Under all alternatives, BLM would comply with all appropriate laws and regulations regarding hazardous materials. Unauthorized storage, treatment, or disposal of hazardous waste on public lands would not be permitted. When the use or storage of hazardous materials is authorized (ie. for instance in mining operations or other types of commercial activities), special stipulations will be applied to comply with appropriate law, regulation, and policy. In the event of hazardous materials incidents on public land, standard operating procedures would be used to respond. Cleanups and reclamation would be conducted in accordance with the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan and the National Environmental Policy Act.

INDIAN TRUST RESOURCES

There are no formal Indian Trust Resources in the planning area. Refer to the Cultural Resources and Tribal Treaty Rights sections for discussions on those issues.

SOCIAL CONDITIONS

Goal – Provide for a diverse array of activities that result in social benefits while minimizing negative social effects.

Management Common to All Alternatives

In accordance with provisions of NEPA and other guiding statutes, impacts would be evaluated and disclosed as part of implementation level planning when it appears actions taken by the BLM DFO have the potential to affect social conditions.

TRIBAL TREATY RIGHTS (including BLM Critical Element Native American Religious Concerns)

Goal – Accommodate treaty and legal rights of appropriate Native American groups in management of public lands.

Management Common to All Alternatives

Under all alternatives, BLM would continue to notify and consult with appropriate Native American tribes on BLM authorized actions. Consultation and coordination would be conducted on a government-to-government basis with Federally recognized tribes. Management of public lands would accommodate the exercise of rights provided by treaties applicable to the planning area. BLM would coordinate with the appropriate entities within tribal government on issues under its jurisdiction to determine appropriate protocols that provide for treaty uses of public lands.

Table 12
Summary Comparison of Alternatives

RESOURCES
<i>Air Quality</i>
Goal – Meet the National Ambient Air Quality Standards and the requirements of the Clean Air Act with all authorized actions.
Management Common to All Alternatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Activities on BLM lands would be conducted in a manner that achieves the <i>Western Montana Standards for Rangeland Health</i> to ensure air quality meets State standards.• Incorporate mitigation measures to minimize air quality degradation into project proposals as necessary, especially prescribed burn treatments.• Participate in state and tribal smoke management programs in accordance with the <i>EPA Interim Air Quality Policy for Wildland and Prescribed Fires</i> (April 1998).• Coordinate with Montana/Idaho Airshed Group and MT DEQ and obtain appropriate permits for prescribed burning.

Cultural Resources				
Goal 1 – Preserve and protect significant cultural resources and ensure that they are available for appropriate uses by present and future generations.				
Management Common to All Alternatives:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monitor a minimum of 10 previously recorded cultural resources (allocated to the Conservation for Future and/or Traditional Use categories) per year to update the site form to current professional standards and to assess the current condition and trend of significant resource values.• Prepare nomination packages for Everson Creek and Muddy Creek archaeological districts to formally list on the National Register of Historic Places.	No Action (Alternative A)	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D
	1. Prepare and implement cultural resource management plans for Everson Creek, Muddy Creek, Sheep Creek Wickiup, and Virginia City Historic District. 2. See ACEC section for discussion on cultural values of Beaverhead Rock, Everson Creek, Lewis and Clark Trail, Muddy Creek/Big Sheep Creek, and Virginia City Historic District potential ACECs.	1. Prepare and implement cultural resource management plans on a case-by-case basis as needed. 2. Same as A.	1. Same as B. 2. Same as A.	1. Same as B. 2. Same as A.
Goal 2 – Reduce imminent threats from natural or human-caused deterioration, or potential conflict with other resource uses, by identifying priority geographic areas for new field inventory, based upon a probability for unrecorded significant resources.				
Management Common to All Alternatives: None				
	No Action (Alternative A)	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D
1. Conduct inventory in the following priority areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ruby Mountains• Centennial Mountains and Continental Divide• Axolotl Lakes area• West End—Lima Reservoir• Moore Creek and East Virginia City Hill• Rochester area• Iron Rod area• South Clark Canyon-North Tendoy Mountains• Blacktail Ridge• Sweetwater Mountains• East Pioneer Foothills• Little Pioneer Foothills• Little Basin Creek and foothills• Glendale Area	1. Conduct inventory of 400 acres in high probability areas and 100 acres in low probability areas annually based on a stratified random sample.	1. Conduct inventory of 800 acres in high probability areas and 200 acres in low probability areas annually based on a stratified random sample.	1. Conduct inventory as time allows using a stratified random sample and focusing on high probability areas.	

<p>Goal 3 – Ensure that all authorizations for land and resource use avoid inadvertent damage to federal and non-federal cultural resources in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.</p> <p>Management Common to All Alternatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act for all federal undertakings.• Avoid impacts to significant cultural resources by project redesign, project abandonment and/or mitigation of adverse impacts through data recovery/alternative means as a last resort.• Manage historic mining properties in accordance with programmatic agreement between BLM, Forest Service, and the Montana SHPO or with procedures as amended to BLM-SHPO Protocol Agreement.
<p>Goal 4 – Promote stewardship, conservation, and appreciation of cultural resources through educational and public outreach programs in accordance with the BLM Heritage Education program.</p> <p>Management Common to All Alternatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prepare cultural resource awareness programs designed to enhance the public appreciation of cultural resource values that will include educational lectures/presentations as well as interpretive displays and scientific use of cultural resources by university field schools.
<p>Goal 5 – Consult with Native Americans to identify any of their cultural values or religious beliefs that may be affected by BLM authorizations or actions.</p> <p>Management Common to All Alternatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conduct legally required consultations with federally recognized Indian tribes as sovereign nations in a government-to-government relationship with the United States.

<i>Fish and Wildlife</i>				
<i>Fish</i>				
<p>Goal 1 – Manage habitat for resident coldwater species that are of high economic, social, or scientific values.</p> <p>Goal 2 – Ensure that aquatic habitat is of suitable quality to support a diversity of plant and animal communities.</p> <p>Desired Future Condition (after 20 years of management)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streams that have sufficient flows provide habitat diversity and conditions that support cold-water fisheries: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A diversity of instream habitat structure is present. Composition and quantity of streambed materials are appropriate for site potential. Riparian vegetation and stream channel morphology contribute to maintaining appropriate water temperatures (generally <70° F). Macroinvertebrate diversity and abundance reflect high water quality. <p>Management Common to All Alternatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate with FWP on fisheries introduction proposals and concerns over fishing regulations. Encourage compatible maintenance work on irrigation diversion structures to reduce fish loss. Work with adjoining landowners to enhance fisheries habitat. Initiate and perform long-term fish habitat and water quality surveys to document and monitor trends in fishery habitat. Coordinate with private entities to modify dams or outlets on Axolotl Lake, Reservoir Lake, and Twin Lakes that will maintain a residual pool and prevent complete drainage. Evaluate and revise the Sheep Creek Aquatic Habitat Management Plan, and implement remaining habitat objectives as necessary within five years. Improve the habitat quality in Sheep Creek for production of game fisheries resulting in improved fish condition and increased numbers. Initiate habitat restoration on fishery streams that are not in proper functioning condition. Coordinate with FWP to manage beaver where site-specific assessments have identified concerns with beaver presence or absence in relation to fish habitat. Place top priority for restoration and improvement on habitats supporting arctic grayling of 99 to 100 percent genetically pure WCT, followed by habitats that support 90 up to 99 percent genetically pure WCT, Class I streams, and other fisheries, respectively. 				
<i>No Action (Alternative A)</i>	<i>Alternative B</i>	<i>Alternative C</i>	<i>Alternative D</i>	
<p>1. Manage fish habitat in a manner that will achieve the <i>Western Montana Standards for Rangeland Health</i>.</p> <p>2. No related action.</p> <p>3. Implement habitat improvement projects where site-specific assessments have identified habitat concerns on fishery streams.</p>	<p>1. Same as A, but in addition manage Class I (blue ribbon) fish habitat and WCT habitat to achieve potential or an upward trend within 15 years.</p> <p>2. Pursue water leasing and improved water management to benefit fisheries values in coordination with FWP for Class 1 (blue ribbon) streams with a priority placed on westslope cutthroat trout and arctic grayling streams.</p> <p>3. Same as A, but focus on projects to increase components of large woody debris in deficient streams to improve fish habitat.</p>	<p>1. Manage habitat containing fish values to achieve potential or an upward trend within 10 years.</p> <p>2. Pursue water leasing and improved water management to benefit fisheries values in coordination with FWP for fisheries streams.</p> <p>3. Same as A, but focus on increase in the amount of security cover available to fish species.</p>	<p>1. Same as A, but in addition manage WCT habitat to achieve potential or an upward trend in 15 years.</p> <p>2. Pursue water leasing and improved water management to benefit fisheries values in coordination with FWP for perennial streams with special status species.</p> <p>3. Same as B.</p>	

<p>Wildlife</p> <p>Goal - Ensure that native wildlife species are provided habitat of sufficient quantity and quality to enhance biological diversity and sustain their ecological, economic and social values. Improve public awareness, understanding and support for resolving issues surrounding wildlife species conservation, management and ecology.</p> <p>Desired Future Condition (after 20 years of management):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A full spectrum of biological communities, habitats, and their ecological processes is present. • Populations of native plants and animals are well-distributed across the landscape. <p>Management Common to All Alternatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide habitat and forage to support wildlife population goals in current FWP big game management plans • Evaluate and revise Hidden Pasture Bighorn and Blacktail HMPs, and Red Rock Waterfowl, Sheep Creek Aquatic, Axolotl Lakes, and Wall Creek HMPs, and implement remaining habitat project objectives as necessary within five years. • Manage wetland habitat in the Centennial Valley under the Red Rock Waterfowl HMP to enhance habitat conditions with emphasis on maximizing opportunities to reestablish and maintain trumpeter swan occupancy. • Coordinate all proposed vegetation treatment projects with FWP. • Install and maintain functional wildlife access ramps on all water tanks on public lands. • Modify fences on BLM identified as barriers to wildlife movement and require new construction to follow “wildlife friendly” fence specifications in BLM Manual Handbook H-1741-1. • Implement wetland based initiatives for waterfowl and wetland dependent species. • Coordinate with FWP to manage beaver where site-specific assessments have identified concerns with beaver presence or absence in riparian-wetland habitats for wildlife. • Maintain current exclosures free from livestock grazing, ensure routine maintenance is completed annually on all exclosures before livestock turnout, and monitor to compare differences between areas grazed and ungrazed by livestock. 				
	<i>No Action (Alternative A)</i>	<i>Alternative B</i>	<i>Alternative C</i>	<i>Alternative D</i>
<i>Coniferous Forest Habitats</i>	<p>1. Analyze big game cover needs on a case-by-case basis for any proposed projects in forested habitat. Maintain cover values to provide security and thermal cover for elk and mule deer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider stand structure, density and snag retention necessary to meet wildlife needs in timber harvest and forest health operations. <p>2. No related action.</p>	<p>1. Minimize big game displacement by limiting sustained vegetation treatment activities to no more than two adjacent 6th order hydrologic units at a time. Maintain adjoining units as disturbance-free as possible during operations.</p> <p>2. No related action.</p>	<p>1. Provide security cover for big game within forested habitat types by maintaining 250 acre core blocks within 6th order hydrologic units.</p> <p>2. Ensure that forest treatment projects that could influence riparian habitat are conducted, or coordinated with riparian improvement projects, to minimize or eliminate any potential for degradation of riparian or aquatic habitat.</p>	<p>1. Same as B.</p> <p>2. No related action.</p>

	<p>3. Allow no timber harvest activities in portions of the following areas to protect wildlife values:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shaw Basin• Noble Creek• North End of the Tendoy• Divide Creek	<p>4. Enhance open-forest habitat for dependent species by maximizing Douglas-fir treatment unit size within the limits of topography and stand size. Give first priority to areas where reduced forest canopy could enhance bighorn reestablishment or expansion, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">—southern Ruby Mtns—south Tobacco Root Mtns—Barton/Alder Gulch <p>5. Same as A.</p>	<p>3. Emphasize forest treatments in dry Douglas-fir types to increase palatable herbaceous and shrub compositions.</p>	<p>3. No related action.</p>
	<p>4. Maintain cattle as primary class of livestock on mountain mahogany habitat. Sheep grazing on mountain mahogany habitats will be mitigated through specific grazing treatments, or where necessary, eliminated.</p> <p>5. No related action.</p> <p>6. No related action.</p>	<p>4. Maintain cattle only as the class of livestock on all mountain mahogany habitat types unless those areas can be retired and closed to grazing.</p> <p>5. Restrict salvage treatments to <40 acres in size. Leave a minimum of 30% of standing dead trees in patches.</p> <p>6. Restore mountain mahogany as the dominant vegetation type where Douglas-fir canopy is >15% and has overtopped mountain mahogany stands. Focus areas include but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Barton Gulch/ Idaho Creek• Canyon Creek/Big Hole• Big Sheep Creek• Hells Canyon.	<p>4. Same as A.</p> <p>5. No related action.</p> <p>6. No related action.</p>	

	<i>No Action (Alternative A)</i>	<i>Alternative B</i>	<i>Alternative C</i>	<i>Alternative D</i>
<i>Sagebrush Steppe Habitats</i>	<p>1. Use the national and Montana sage grouse conservation strategies as the basis to address sage grouse needs during watershed planning processes and project level analysis.</p> <p>2. Assure the availability of quality herbaceous cover and forage for wildlife species within moist meadow and sagebrush swales on a case-by-case basis by implementing utilization recommendations or other management actions.</p>	<p>1. Same as A. When making project decisions located in sage grouse habitat, objectives for sage grouse habitats and relevant information about sage grouse seasonal habitat will be considered when determining the desired resource condition. If specific issues regarding sage grouse are identified, applicable conservation actions or guidelines will be reviewed by interdisciplinary teams and considered in the decision-making process. None of the conservation actions or guidelines in the <i>Management Plan and Conservation Strategies for Sage Grouse in Montana</i> should be construed as mandatory or standards.</p> <p>2. Sagebrush habitats would be managed so that the mid-scale level (mid-scale is assessed at a basin or sub-basin level) shrub cover should include a mix of height classes with herbaceous understory adequate for meeting seasonal habitat requirements for sage grouse (see WAFWA Guidelines in Appendix D) and other wildlife species that use sagebrush habitat including wintering antelope and mule deer.</p>	<p>1. Use the national and Montana sage grouse conservation strategies, and sage grouse guidelines as standards.</p> <p>2. Manage sagebrush habitats to provide suitable seasonal habitat for sage grouse as described in the Montana sagebrush/sage grouse habitat assessment protocol (supplement to the Montana sage grouse conservation strategy). Specific vegetation canopy and density objectives will be developed at the activity planning level (fine scale).</p>	<p>1. Same as A.</p> <p>2. No related action.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In habitats with predominately mountain big sagebrush, manage sites with the potential to support sagebrush in a manner that maintains ≥ 70 percent of those areas in canopy closure of 5 to 25 percent.• In those habitats that include predominately Wyoming big sagebrush, manage sites with ecological potential to maintain sagebrush over at least 60 percent of those areas in a canopy closure of 5 to 25 percent.• Maintain an herbaceous understory emphasizing multiple species of native forbs and grasses, recognizing that herbaceous productivity decreases at > 10-15% canopy cover.• Emphasize restoration and rehabilitation of sagebrush in areas that are capable of supporting sagebrush and contribute to the distribution and connectivity of patches.	

	<p>3. Forego activities such as prescribed burning, spraying, and mechanical alteration in sagebrush habitat that is important for wildlife species.</p> <p>4. No related action.</p>	<p>3. Wildfire suppression efforts would focus on protecting large dense stands of sagebrush that are isolated from other dense stands.</p> <p>4. Enhance bighorn sheep habitat suitability in currently occupied habitat by minimizing or avoiding competing uses and disturbance factors.</p>	<p>3. Sagebrush habitats providing sage grouse, mule deer and antelope winter range would develop within site potential without manipulation treatments (prescribed burning, spraying, mechanical treatment, etc).</p> <p>4. Same as B.</p>	<p>3. Treat no more than 30% of Class 4 and 5 sagebrush stands within 20 years across all ownerships. Do not increase livestock stocking rates in vegetation treatment areas.</p> <p>4. No related action.</p>
	<i>No Action (Alternative A)</i>	<i>Alternative B</i>	<i>Alternative C</i>	<i>Alternative D</i>
<i>Riparian-Wetland Habitats</i>	<p>1. See <i>Riparian Vegetation</i> section.</p> <p>2. Protect axolotl habitat by excluding grazing, timber harvest, and wheeled vehicle use in the Blue Lake area.</p>	<p>1. See <i>Riparian Vegetation</i> section.</p> <p>2. Same as A.</p>	<p>1. See <i>Riparian Vegetation</i> section.</p> <p>2. Same as A, but also withdraw the Axolotl Lakes watershed, including Blue Lake, from locatable mineral entry.</p>	<p>1. See <i>Riparian Vegetation</i> section.</p> <p>2. Same as A.</p>

<i>Geologic Resources</i>				
Goal –Provide opportunities for use of the geology of the area while protecting resource values.				
Management Common to All Alternatives:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post and protect the geologic features of Wedding Ring Rock (also known as Lime Kiln Arch), Squirrel Rock, and Road Agents Rock and pursue the withdrawal of each location from mineral entry to preserve the geological features. Manage the geological features formed by Nemesis Mountain and Sheep Mountain as part of the Centennial Mountains WSA. 				
	<i>No Action (Alternative A)</i>	<i>Alternative B</i>	<i>Alternative C</i>	<i>Alternative D</i>
	1. See ACEC section for discussion on geologic values of Block Mountain potential ACEC.	1. Same as A.	1. Same as A.	1. Same as A.

<i>Paleontological Resources</i>				
Goal 1—Preserve and protect significant paleontological resources and ensure that they are available for appropriate uses by present and future generations.				
Management Common to All Alternatives:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain an inventory of paleontological sites and localities. • Require permits for individuals or institutions conducting paleontological investigations for vertebrate fossils on public lands and insure that fossils remain in Federal ownership in perpetuity. • Establish a long term monitoring program at known paleontological locales to assess potential adverse impacts; and mitigate adverse impacts as appropriate. • Monitor a minimum of one locality per year. 				
	<i>No Action (Alternative A)</i>	<i>Alternative B</i>	<i>Alternative C</i>	<i>Alternative D</i>
	1. See ACEC section for discussion of paleontologic values in Centennial Valley Wetlands potential ACEC.	1. Same as A.	1. Same as A.	1. Same as A.
Goal 2—Ensure that proposed land uses initiated or authorized by BLM avoid inadvertent damage to federal and non-federal paleontological resources.				
Management Common to All Alternatives:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior to projects that may result in surface or sub-surface disturbance, conduct an inventory for vertebrate paleontological resources in conjunction with the inventory for cultural resources. • Comply with various federal regulations for the protection of paleontological remains by avoiding impacts to paleontological remains through project redesign, project abandonment, and/or mitigation of adverse impacts through scientific recovery and analysis. 				
Goal 3—Promote the stewardship, conservation, and appreciation of paleontological resources through appropriate educational and public outreach programs.				
Management Common to All Alternatives:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare paleontological resource awareness programs designed to enhance the public appreciation of paleontological resource values. • Encourage scientific use of paleontological resources by university field schools. 				

<p><i>Soils</i></p>	<p>Goal –Maintain or improve soil health and fertility, prevent or minimize erosion and compaction, and reduce the possibility of mass wasting on unstable soils, while supporting multiple use.</p> <p>Management Common to All Alternatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain canopy cover determined necessary to protect unstable soils. • Surface disturbance associated with timber harvest will be allowed on unstable soils if acceptable techniques are applied to mitigate the possible negative effects of mass wasting. • Address isolated slumps on a site-by-site basis, based upon intensity of disturbance proposed. • Require detailed engineering design and geologic analysis in areas of suspected instability and require mitigation plans. • Diagnose soil compaction and erosion problems using the <i>Western Montana Standards for Rangeland</i>. • Use appropriate mitigation or place seasonal restrictions on activities authorized by BLM in areas with significant soil compaction or erosion.
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<i>Special Status Species—General</i>	
Goals and Desired Future Conditions are identified under the respective <i>Special Status Species</i> sections for <i>Birds and Mammals</i> , <i>Fish</i> , and <i>Plant Special Status Species</i> sections.	
Management Common to All Alternatives:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure habitat is provided for special status species and proposed actions do not jeopardize the continued existence of a threatened or endangered species, or cause its habitat to be adversely modified or destroyed.• Continue cooperative participation in recovery plans, management plans, and conservation strategies for special status species.• Use individual species conservation strategies to design habitat strategies that will promote conservation of as many other wildlife species as possible.• Enhance, restore and maintain habitat conditions and availability for special status species, and prevent all avoidable loss of habitat.• Manage special status species habitats and populations using multi-scale assessments to identify current conditions, risks and opportunities.

<i>Special Status Species—Birds and Mammals</i>			
<p>Goal – Ensure the long-term, self-sustaining persistence of special status animal species in the Dillon Field Office.</p> <p>Desired Future Condition (after 20 years of management)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage wetland habitats to support a healthy diversity and abundance of dependent wildlife species • Manage forested and sagebrush habitat within the historic range of variability for vegetation, composition, canopy and structure to support a diversity and abundance of dependent wildlife species, with emphasis on special status species needs. • Provide suitable habitat and condition to allow wildlife, species movement between large blocks of habitat, and seasonal and special habitats on a localized and landscape scale. <p>Management Common to All Alternatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperative implementation and monitoring of recovery plans, State of Montana management plans, and conservation strategies would continue for bald eagle, peregrine falcon, grizzly bear, wolf, Canada lynx and sage grouse. • Manage special status species habitat to minimize disturbance and displacement due to authorizations and activities, particularly during breeding seasons. • Continue to gather habitat and population data to enhance management effectiveness, with emphasis on migratory birds, amphibian and reptiles, and bats. • Implement habitat improvement or restoration projects to enhance the distribution and availability of special status species. Prioritize habitat projects where fragmentation and risks to the security of special status species is highest. • Allow no net loss of overall distribution and quality of sagebrush and wetland habitats, recognizing that short-term, localized losses may occur through management activities. • Wetland habitat in the Centennial Valley would be managed to enhance residual nesting cover, water availability, and create additional wetland habitat with emphasis on maximizing opportunities to reestablish and maintain trumpeter swan occupancy. • Coordinate with APHIS-Wildlife Services to monitor annual damage control effects and resolution of livestock depredation in accordance with the APHIS-BLM Master Memorandum of Understanding and the 1997 Predator Damage Management Plan for western Montana. 			
<i>No Action (Alternative A)</i>	<i>Alternative B</i>	<i>Alternative C</i>	<i>Alternative D</i>
<p>1. Consider impacts to wildlife movement and migration on a case-by-case basis during project planning and implementation.</p>	<p>1. Maintain or enhance dispersal/migration corridors for special status species and general wildlife movement as shown on Map 3 and use prescribed conservation measures to evaluate grizzly bear, wolf and lynx needs and risk factors (road density, food storage, livestock conflicts, etc.) when issuing use authorizations within suitable BLM habitat</p>	<p>1. Same as B, except that one additional management action would apply (existing sheep permits could not be transferred).</p>	<p>1. Same as A.</p>

	<p>2. No related action.</p> <p>3. No related action.</p> <p>4. Consider impacts to migratory birds on a case-by-case basis during implementation and project planning.</p>	<p>2. See #1 above.</p> <p>3. Monitor East Fork of the Blacktail and South Madison campgrounds and Axolotl Lakes area for food storage conflicts with grizzly bear and mitigate problems when they occur.</p> <p>4. Implement the North American Bird Conservation Initiative to restore, enhance and maintain habitats for all birds.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include USFWS Birds of Conservation Concern for Bird Conservation Region 10 for consideration in project biological evaluations. • Emphasize restoration and maintenance of habitats that sustain sensitive species with a minimum of disturbance during spring breeding seasons. 	<p>2. See #1 above.</p> <p>3. Same as B.</p> <p>4. Implement the North American Bird Conservation Initiative to restore, enhance and maintain habitats for all birds.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include USFWS Birds of Conservation Concern for Bird Conservation Region 10 for consideration in project biological evaluations. • Emphasize restoration and maintenance of habitats that sustain sensitive species with a minimum of disturbance during spring breeding seasons. • Restore habitat composition and structure that has been lost or reduced on grazing allotments where upland and riparian rangeland health standards are not being met. 	<p>2. Use prescribed conservation measures to evaluate grizzly bear, wolf and lynx needs and risk factors (road density, food storage, livestock conflicts, etc.) when issuing use authorizations within suitable BLM habitat in the Grizzly Bear use areas outside of the Yellowstone Recovery Zone (primarily Centennial Valley and East Fork of the Blacktail) depicted on Map 5.</p> <p>3. Same as B.</p> <p>4. Same as A.</p>
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	<p>5. Consider impacts to bats on a case-by-case basis during project planning and implementation.</p> <p>6. Consider impacts to pygmy rabbits on a case-by-case basis during project planning and implementation.</p> <p>7. Consider impacts to raptors on a case-by-case basis during project planning and implementation.</p> <p>8. See <i>ACEC</i> section for discussion on special status species within the Centennial Mountains, Centennial Valley Wetlands, and Ferruginous Hawk Nesting Area potential ACECs.</p>	<p>5. Same as A.</p> <p>6. Same as A, but also emphasize protection of dense sagebrush patches within occupied pygmy rabbit habitat.</p> <p>7. Same as A, but also maintain ferruginous hawk habitat suitability within the Lima Foothills and Sweetwater Breaks key raptor management areas. Protect nesting structures, maintain sagebrush/grassland interspersed and enhance prey abundance in these areas.</p> <p>Evaluate proposed activities for potential disturbance during the breeding season, and limit sustained activities March 1 through September 1 within 1/2 mile of nest sites on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>8. Same as A.</p>	<p>5. Same as A, but also initiate bat inventory and monitoring to identify area-wide occurrence, distribution and population risks.</p> <p>6. Same as B, but also develop a conservation strategy/HMP for pygmy rabbit management that identifies habitat suitability, risk factors and management strategies.</p> <p>7. Same as A, but also maintain raptor breeding habitat suitability across the planning area. Protect nesting structures, maintain or enhance vegetation diversity, and enhance prey abundance.</p> <p>Evaluate proposed activities for potential disturbance during the breeding season, and limit sustained activities March 1 through September 1 within one mile of nest sites on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>8. Same as A.</p>	<p>5. Same as A.</p> <p>6. Same as A.</p> <p>7. Same as B.</p> <p>8. Same as A.</p>
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<i>Special Status Species–Fish</i>				
<p>Goal – Ensure the long-term persistence and maintain the genetic diversity of the individual populations of westslope cutthroat trout in the Dillon Field Office. Ensure the long-term self-sustaining persistence of fluvial and adfluvial arctic grayling in the Dillon Field Office.</p> <p>See Desired Future Condition under <i>Fish</i>.</p> <p>Management Common to All Alternatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in the implementation of the MOU and the Conservation Agreement for WCT in Montana. • Participate in the implementation of the Restoration Plan for fluvial arctic grayling. • Initiate and perform long-term fisheries habitat and water quality surveys to document and monitor trends in fishery habitat. • Encourage maintenance work on diversion structures to reduce WCT and arctic grayling loss in irrigation ditches. • Initiate habitat restoration on special status species fishery streams that are Functioning At Risk (FAR) or Nonfunctional (NF). • Develop a cooperative agreement with FWP for adequate protection and access to the fluvial arctic grayling brood pond within the Axolotl Lakes area. • Coordinate with FWP to manage beaver where site-specific assessments have identified concerns with beaver presence or absence in relation to sensitive fish species habitat. • Place top priority for restoration and improvement on habitats supporting arctic grayling of 99 to 100 percent genetically pure WCT, followed by habitats that support 90 up to 99 percent genetically pure WCT, Class I streams, and other fisheries, respectively. • See <i>Fisheries</i> section for discussion of fisheries habitat by alternative and the Westslope Cutthroat Trout section of Appendix D. 				
	<i>No Action (Alternative A)</i>	<i>Alternative B</i>	<i>Alternative C</i>	<i>Alternative D</i>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Manage habitat containing sensitive fish values in a manner that will achieve the <i>Western Montana Standards for Rangeland Health</i>. 2. No related action. 3. No related action. 4. No related action. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Manage habitat containing sensitive fish values to achieve potential or an upward trend within 15 years. 2. Protect concentrated spawning areas in 99% and above WCT streams. 3. Require bonding and full restoration of disturbed habitat in WCT streams with 90% and above pure populations where surface disturbing mineral exploration or development occurs within 100 feet of the centerline of any stream. 4. Pursue water leasing in coordination with FWP for WCT and grayling streams. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Manage habitat containing sensitive fish values to achieve potential or an upward trend within 10 years. 2. Protect WCT spawning and fry emergence between April 15 and August 15. 3. Withdraw WCT streams with 90% and above pure populations from mineral entry. 4. Same as Alternative B. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Manage habitat containing sensitive fish values to achieve potential or an upward trend within 15 years. 2. No related action. 3. No related action. 4. No related action.

	5. No related action. 6. See <i>ACEC</i> section for discussion on WCT values in WCT Habitat (99% and above purity) potential <i>ACEC</i> .	5. No related action. 6. Same as A.	5. Coordinate with FWP on reintroduction of fluvial grayling in Big Hole headwaters streams (i.e. Yank Swamp, Big Lake Creek). 6. Same as A.	5. No related action. 6. Same as A.
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<i>Special Status Species—Plants</i>				
<p>Goal 1—Identify, conserve, and monitor rare, vulnerable, and representative habitats, plant communities, and ecosystems to ensure that there is a self-sustaining persistence of special status plants within the DFO.</p> <p>Goal 2—Ensure that proposed land uses initiated or authorized by BLM avoid inadvertent damage to habitats supporting special status plants and plant communities.</p> <p>Goal 3—Promote public awareness, appreciation and understanding of rare plants and their habitats.</p>				
<p>Desired Future Condition</p> <p>The necessary habitat, biological processes, and disturbance regimes will be present on DFO lands to maintain or enhance populations of special status plant species.</p>				
<p>Management Common to All Alternatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist in maintaining Montana's web-based rare plant field guide. • Educate weed crews to recognize and avoid special status plants and habitats. • Consider the potential for adverse effects on special status plants during project level planning and recommend mitigation measures to protect them during preparation of site-specific environmental documents. • Continue and consider additional inventory, monitoring, and research studies on special status plants and associated plant communities. 				
	<i>No Action (Alternative A)</i>	<i>Alternative B</i>	<i>Alternative C</i>	<i>Alternative D</i>
	<p>1. Use existing inventories to determine presence/absence of BLM special status plant populations.</p> <p>2. Consider mitigation measures to protect BLM special status plants on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>3. Manage habitat containing BLM special status plants to be consistent with achieving the Western Montana Standards for Rangeland Health.</p>	<p>1. Conduct field inspections to identify special status plant species prior to authorizing surface disturbing activities. Waivers for on-the-ground inventory would be granted in areas determined to have low potential based on existing information.</p> <p>2. Do not authorize activities that disturb mineral soil (blading, plowing, ripping, chaining, etc.) within populations of BLM special status plants.</p> <p>3. Adjust management to protect or enhance BLM special status plants when the <i>Western Montana Standards for Rangeland Health</i> are not being met or when monitoring shows BLM special status plants are being impacted.</p>	<p>1. Same as B.</p> <p>2. Minimize or eliminate activities that disturb mineral soil (blading, plowing, ripping, chaining, etc.) within 1/4 mile of populations of BLM special status plants.</p> <p>3. Defer grazing or provide yearlong rest two years out of three on habitats supporting populations of BLM special status plant species susceptible to herbivory. Genera currently on the BLM special status plant list that are susceptible to herbivory include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Astragalus</i> • <i>Carex</i> • <i>Elymus</i> • <i>Penstemon</i> • <i>Taraxacum</i> 	<p>1. Same as B.</p> <p>2. Same as B.</p> <p>3. Same as A.</p>

	<p>4. Consider applications for changes in season of use of grazing allotments on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>5. Consider applications for grazing use on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>6. No related action.</p>	<p>4. Maintain winter grazing use on BLM lands in the following allotments to benefit BLM special status plant species:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> —Frenchie Allotment #10121 —Timber Butte Allotment #20168 —Cold Spring Allotment #20215 —Spring Creek Pasture of Stonehouse Allotment #30005 <p>5. Issue no term grazing permit or lease in the Eli Spring area (S1/2 Sec. 3, N1/2 Sec. 10, T9S, R11W). Temporary non-renewable grazing could be authorized to meet BLM special status plant needs.</p> <p>6. Adopt or develop habitat management plans and conservation strategies for BLM special status plant species/habitats, with priority placed on the following species:</p> <p>For riparian habitats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Carex idahoensis</i> • <i>Primula alcalina</i> • <i>Taraxacum eriophorum</i> • <i>Thalictrum alpinum</i> <p>For sagebrush-steppe habitats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Penstemon lemhiensis</i> • <i>Astragalus scaphoides</i> • <i>Astragalus terminalis</i> • <i>Sphaeromeria argentea</i> 	<p>4. Same as B.</p> <p>5. Same as B, but also reroute the road around the spring to avoid BLM special status plant habitat, and to maintain Eli Spring in a natural, undeveloped state.</p> <p>6. Develop habitat management plans for the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upper Big Sheep Creek Watershed • North Tendency Mtns • Sage Creek Watershed • Centennial Valley • Bannack Bench/Badger Pass/Rocky Hills 	<p>4. Same as A.</p> <p>5. Same as A.</p> <p>6. No related action.</p>
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<i>Vegetation—Forests and Woodlands</i>				
<p>Goal – Manage forests and woodlands to sustain their vitality and diversity.</p> <p>Desired Future Condition for Forests and Woodlands (after 20-50 years of management):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curl leaf mountain mahogany occupy historic range and are in stable or improving condition. • Douglas-fir/sagebrush interface represents an open savannah aspect. Rocky Mountain juniper and limber pine are restricted to historic sites where wildland fire frequency is limited by lower site productivity and sparse fuels. Both species occur in low densities in association with vigorous shrubs, grasses, and forbs (where site potential permits). • Douglas-fir forests contain healthy stands of site-appropriate species. Stands are relatively open, with tree density within site capacity. Low intensity fires can be accommodated without excessive loss of trees, and insect and disease occurrence is at endemic levels. • Lodgepole pine and spruce/fir forests are represented by a diversity of age classes and structure. • White bark pine forests occupy historic range and are in stable or improving condition. • Quaking aspen groves occupy historic range and are in stable or improving condition. Aspen stands contain multi-aged stems and adequate regeneration to perpetuate the stand. Age classes are mostly less than 100 years old with good understory diversity. <p>Management Common to All Alternatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue collaborative vegetation planning on a multi-agency ownership basis. • Coordinate all proposed vegetation treatment projects with FWP. • Conduct no mechanical treatment on slopes of 70% or greater. • Aspen restoration treatments of 100 acres or less will be excluded from livestock grazing until aspen regeneration is a minimum of 5 feet tall on average. • Consider treatment of insect infestations with sanitation cutting or other methods on a case-by-case basis. • Provide wood products as a result of vegetation treatments on a case-by-case basis where appropriate • Consider salvage harvest on a case-by-case basis. 				
	<i>No Action (Alternative A)</i>	<i>Alternative B</i>	<i>Alternative C</i>	<i>Alternative D</i>
	1. Conduct forest vegetation inventory utilizing the Forest Vegetation Information System (FORVIS).	1. Same as A, but with target completion date of 2020.	1. Same as B.	1. Same as B.

<p>2. Emphasize treatment of vegetation that has missed two or more fire cycles. Treat lands in the Pioneer and Gravelly landscapes to provide for forest health as identified in respective landscape analyses. Treat approximately 6,700 acres of Warm and Dry habitat and 1,300 acres of Cool and Moist Habitat and 500 acres of Aspen Restoration.</p> <p>Treat up to 3,000 acres outside of the Pioneer and Gravelly landscapes using conventional treatments.</p>	<p>2. Focus on the following geographic areas for treatment of forest and woodlands first:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • southern Rubys • south Tobacco Roots • Barton/Idaho Gulch <p>Treat up to 4,000 acres in Cool/Moist habitat type groups with commercial thinning, group/individual tree selection, or clearcut with reserve treatments within these geographic areas.</p> <p>Treat up to 10,000 acres in Warm and Very Dry and/or Warm and Dry habitat types using commercial thinning or group/individual tree selection treatments.</p> <p>Once treatments in focus areas are implemented continue treatment in the Warm and Very Dry and/or Warm and Dry habitat types up to an additional 9,000 acres using commercial thinning, group or individual tree selection treatments, with priority in urban interface areas.</p> <p>3. Implement up to 12,000 acres of aspen restoration treatments in priority areas primarily located in southern portions of the DFO. Follow-up with a variety of methods including mechanical treatments, fire, and other appropriate tools.</p> <p>4. Allow the use of prescribed fire and associated tools within WSAs where treatment would enhance wilderness values and restore the role of fire to the WSAs.</p>	<p>2. Treat up to 7,000 acres across the planning area in Warm and Very Dry and/or Warm and Dry habitat types using commercial thinning, group, or individual tree selection treatments.</p> <p>Do not treat forest and woodlands in Cool Moist habitat types.</p>	<p>2. Place priority for treatment in urban interface areas first.</p> <p>Treat up to 15,000 acres of Warm and Very Dry and/or Warm and Dry habitat types across the planning area using commercial thinning or group/individual tree selection treatments.</p> <p>Treat up to 22,000 acres of Warm and Moist and/or Cool and Moist habitat type groups across the planning area using commercial thinning, group or individual tree selection, and/or clearcut with reserves treatments.</p>
<p>3. Implement aspen restoration treatments on a case-by-case basis.</p>	<p>3. Implement up to 12,000 acres of aspen restoration treatments in priority areas primarily located in southern portions of the DFO. Follow-up with a variety of methods including mechanical treatments, fire, and other appropriate tools.</p> <p>4. Allow no mechanical treatment in WSAs until released from further wilderness consideration.</p>	<p>3. Implement up to 12,000 acres of aspen restoration treatments in priority areas primarily located in southern portions of the DFO. De-emphasize follow-up mechanical treatments, but treat with prescribed fire.</p> <p>4 Same as A.</p>	<p>3. Implement up to 14,000 acres of aspen restoration treatments across the planning area using a variety of tools. Follow-up with a variety of methods including mechanical, fire and other appropriate tools.</p> <p>4. Same as B.</p>

<i>Vegetation—Invasive and Non-native species, including Noxious Weeds</i>				
<p>Goal – Prevent the introduction and spread of invasive and noxious plants.</p> <p>Desired Future Condition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New infestations of noxious weeds are not common across the landscape, and existing large infestations are declining. <p>Management Common to All Alternatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage Montana State designated noxious weeds according to the principles of integrated pest management, Partners Against Weeds An Action Plan for the Bureau of Land Management, (BLM 1996b), the Montana Weed Management Plan, (Duncan 2001) and the Montana Noxious Weed Act. Continue cooperative agreements with Beaverhead and Madison counties for noxious weed control. Encourage the development of Cooperative Weed Management Areas where all the landowners are cooperatively working to contain or eradicate noxious weeds within designated areas. Treatment methods include chemical, cultural, mechanical, and biological. Evaluate invasive species such as downy brome (cheat grass) in site-specific projects associated with the watershed analysis. Reestablish perennial vegetation using native species in rehabilitation and reclamation unless site specific evaluations indicate that nonnative species are needed to ensure success or rapid vegetative reestablishment. 				
	<i>No Action (Alternative A)</i>	<i>Alternative B</i>	<i>Alternative C</i>	<i>Alternative D</i>
	<p>1. Prohibit aerial application of herbicides and pesticides on a case-by-case basis.</p>	<p>1. Same as A, but emphasize protection of special status plants and associated plant communities in the Centennial Sandhills and Big Sheep Creek Basin, occupied pygmy rabbit habitat, sage grouse breeding habitat, and mountain mahogany habitats.</p>	<p>1. Prohibit aerial application of herbicides and pesticides in the following locations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> —within 1/4 mile of special status plants and associated plant communities —within occupied pygmy rabbit habitat identified at the project level —within sage grouse breeding habitat —within mountain mahogany habitats 	<p>1. Same as A.</p>

<i>Vegetation–Rangelands</i>				
<p>Goal – Manage the vegetative resource to maintain a diversity of ecological conditions on upland vegetation.</p> <p>Desired Future Condition for Rangelands (after 20-50 years of management):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sagebrush steppe includes a mosaic of multiple-aged shrubs, forbs, and native perennial grasses. Shrub overstories are present in a variety of spatial arrangements and scales across the landscape, including disjunct islands and corridors. • A full range of sagebrush communities with diverse species and sub-species, canopy, density, and age classes are present across the landscape. • Grass and forb plant communities occur within site potential and are stable or improving in health and vigor. • Populations and habitats of rare plant species and their associated communities are stable or continue to improve in vigor and distribution. • Upland vegetation provides sufficient plant cover and litter accumulation to protect soils from wind and water erosion, and enhances nutrient cycling and productivity. <p>Management Common to All Alternatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions on BLM lands are consistent with achieving the <i>Western Montana Standards for Rangeland Health</i>. • Complete assessments for rangeland health on a priority watershed basis. • Strategies that best protect rangeland resources during periods of drought would be implemented with an emphasis on voluntary adjustments in livestock use to achieve long-term resource productivity. 				
	<i>No Action (Alternative A)</i>	<i>Alternative B</i>	<i>Alternative C</i>	<i>Alternative D</i>
	<p>1-7. Consider vegetation treatments in rangeland habitats on a case-by-case basis.</p>	<p>1. Treat or harvest conifer encroachment in all non-forested habitat types on a case-by-case basis using prescribed and natural fire, mechanical treatment, or other tools as appropriate.</p> <p>Focus treatments in areas of urban interface and in the following geographic areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • southern Rubys • south Tobacco Roots • Barton/Idaho Gulch <p>2. Treat xeric shrub on a case-by case basis using all available tools for a fire return interval of approximately 50 years.</p>	<p>1. Treat or harvest conifer encroachment in all non-forested habitat types located within aspen restoration areas or urban interface using prescribed fire, mechanical treatment, or other tools as appropriate.</p> <p>Treat conifer encroachment in non-forested habitat types located outside of aspen restoration areas or urban interface using prescribed natural fire only.</p> <p>2. Treat xeric shrub using only natural fire for a fire return interval of approximately 50 years.</p>	<p>1. Treat or harvest conifer encroachment in all non-forested habitat types on a case-by-case basis using prescribed and natural fire, mechanical treatment, or other tools as appropriate.</p> <p>2. Consider treatment on a case-by-case basis using all tools available to manage xeric shrub habitat types in areas that exceed a canopy density of 25% for a fire return interval of approximately 50 years</p>

	<p>3. Treat mountain shrub on a case-by case basis using all available tools for a fire return interval of approximately 20 to 40 years.</p> <p>4. Treat fire-sprouted mountain shrub on a case-by case basis using all available tools for a fire return interval of approximately 20 years.</p> <p>5. Consider treatment of mesic shrub habitat types (which occur in limited amounts within the planning area) on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>6. Consider treatment of mountain mahogany habitat types (which occur in limited amounts within the planning area) on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>7. Seedlings will meet site-specific objectives. Focus restoration on areas containing high resource values using all tools available.</p>	<p>3. Treat mountain shrub using only natural fire for a fire return interval of approximately 20 to 40 years.</p> <p>4. Treat fire-sprouted mountain shrub using only natural fire for a fire return interval of approximately 20 years.</p> <p>5. Same as B.</p> <p>6. Restore mountain mahogany as the dominant vegetation type where Douglas-fir canopy is >15% and has overtopped mountain mahogany stands. Focus areas include but are not limited to: —Barton Gulch/ Idaho Creek —Canyon Creek/Big Hole —Big Sheep Creek —Hells Canyon</p> <p>7. Restore seedlings to native communities where site potential allows and a diversity of native vegetation is not being recruited. Restoration of priority habitats and species would be accomplished by using all available tools.</p>	<p>3. Treat up to 30,000 acres of mountain shrub habitat types using prescribed and natural fire and other tools. This habitat would be managed for a fire return interval of 20 to 40 years.</p> <p>4. Treat up to 7,000 acres of fire sprouted mountain shrub habitat types using prescribed and natural fire and other tools. This habitat would be managed for a fire return interval of 20 years.</p> <p>5. Same as B.</p> <p>6. Same as B.</p> <p>7. Take no proactive measures to restore seedlings to native habitats.</p>
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<i>Vegetation–Riparian and Wetlands</i>				
<p>Goal –Restore and maintain riparian wetland areas so that at least 906 miles of streams and 2,319 acres of wetlands are in proper functioning condition. The actual number of miles of stream and acres of wetlands will be adjusted as inventories are completed throughout the planning area.</p> <p>Desired Future Condition for Riparian and Wetlands (after 20-50 years of management):</p> <p>Manage for proper functioning conditions on all riparian and wetland habitats.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Riparian and wetland vegetation supports proper functioning condition of biologic, hydrologic, and physical components of streams and wetlands. Deciduous woody and coniferous communities are present with diverse composition, density, and age structure within site potential. Herbaceous plant communities are dominated by deep-rooted native species that support streambank and shoreline stability, floodplain development, and nutrient cycling. Stream channels display the dimensions, pattern and profile that are representative of site potential (Rosgen). Emphasize a tall deciduous shrub or aspen/cottonwood dominance on ~570 miles of stream with the remainder in herbaceous and coniferous habitat types (~385 miles). Conifer types (juniper, spruce, DF) Existing 45% 440 miles Desired 25% 240 miles Aspen/cottonwood types 15% 133 miles 20% 190 miles Tall shrub types (willow, dogwood, birch) 30% 280 miles 40% 380 miles Herbaceous, misc. types 10% 102 miles 15% 145 miles Aquatic vegetation supports populations of well-distributed native and desired non-native vertebrate and invertebrate species. <p>Management Common To All Alternatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actions on BLM lands would be consistent with achieving the <i>Western Montana Standards for Rangeland</i>. Use the <i>Western Montana Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management</i> and the <i>Best Management Practices for Grazing, Montana</i> (DNRC 1999) to develop site-specific objectives and management strategies for riparian and wetland areas during the development and implementation of proposed actions and plans. Conserve riparian/wetland habitat by intensifying cooperative efforts among state, private and federal interests and minimize the destruction, loss or degradation of wetlands. Maintain current exclosures free from livestock grazing, ensure routine maintenance is completed annually on all exclosures before livestock turnout, and monitor to compare differences between areas grazed and ungrazed by livestock. Coordinate all proposed vegetation treatment projects with FWP. Coordinate with FWP to manage beaver where site-specific assessments have identified concerns with beaver presence or absence in relation to riparian habitat conditions. 				
<i>No Action (Alternative A)</i>	<i>Alternative B</i>	<i>Alternative C</i>	<i>Alternative D</i>	
1. Manage for PFC on all riparian and wetland habitats. Increase PFC from 18%. Decrease FAR from 59% and decrease NF from 23%.	1. Manage to achieve DFC or an upward trend in 20 years. Increase PFC from 18% to 50%. Decrease FAR from 59% to 30% and NF from 23% to 20%.	1. Manage to achieve DFC or an upward trend in 10 years. Increase PFC from 18% to 60%. Decrease FAR from 59% to 20% and NF from 23% to 20%.	1. Manage to achieve an upward trend within the 20 years life of plan, projected DFC would not be achieved in 20 years, but could be achieved in 50 years. Increase PFC from 18% to 80%. Decrease FAR from 59% to 20% and NF from 23% to 0%.	

	<p>2. No related action.</p> <p>3. No related action.</p>	<p>2. Restore ~100 miles of conifer riparian habitat types with deciduous woody canopy of >15% back to aspen/cottonwood or tall shrub habitat types, using the classes described in the narrative.</p> <p>3. No related action.</p>	<p>2. Same as B</p> <p>3. Manage aspen/Kentucky bluegrass habitat types as a priority for treatment in both upland and riparian settings to restore a diversity of aspen age classes and structure, and native herbaceous vegetation. Treatments should be large scale and widespread to avoid concentrated use by wild ungulates. Aspen restoration treatments of 100 acres or less will be excluded from grazing until aspen regeneration is a minimum of 5 feet tall on average. (See <i>Livestock Grazing and Forests and Woodlands Vegetation</i> sections for additional aspen treatment information).</p>	<p>2. Apply riparian restoration projects to aspen communities only. Otherwise, succession would be allowed to proceed to coniferous types within site potential in riparian communities.</p> <p>3. No related action.</p>
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<i>Visual Resources</i>				
Goal – Manage scenic values in accordance with the objectives established for Visual Resource Management (VRM) classes.				
Management Common to All Alternatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage visual resources according to established guidelines for VRM classes as described in Chapter 3. Use the visual resource contrast rating system during project level planning to determine whether or not proposed activities will meet VRM objectives. Identify mitigation measures to reduce visual contrasts. Prepare rehabilitation plans to address landscape modifications on a case-by-case basis. 				
	<i>No Action (Alternative A)</i>	<i>Alternative B</i>	<i>Alternative C</i>	<i>Alternative D</i>
	1. Manage 129,163 acres as VRM Class I. 2. Manage 34,392 acres as VRM Class II. 3. Manage 218,442 acres as VRM Class III. 4. Manage 519,045 acres as VRM Class IV. 5. See ACEC section for discussion on scenic values in the Centennial Mountains and Muddy Creek/Big Sheep Creek potential ACECs.	1. Manage 128,269 acres as VRM Class I. 2. Manage 30,810 acres as VRM Class II. 3. Manage 723,585 acres as VRM Class III. 4. Manage 18,412 acres as VRM Class IV. 5. Same as A.	1. Manage 128,269 acres as VRM Class I. 2. Manage 42,370 acres as VRM Class II. 3. Manage 711,969 acres as VRM Class III. 4. Manage 18,412 acres as VRM Class IV. 5. Same as A.	1. Manage 128,269 acres as VRM Class I. 2. Manage 30,397 acres as VRM Class II. 3. Manage 697,669 acres as VRM Class III. 4. Manage 44,752 acres as VRM Class IV. 5. Same as A.

Water
<p>Goal – Restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of waters within BLM lands to protect beneficial uses.</p> <p>Desired Future Condition (after 20 years of management)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• All water sources provide water quality and quality sufficient to meet Montana State standards and to protect or restore beneficial uses.• Stream channels display the dimensions, pattern and profile that are representative of site potential to allow floodplain aquifer recharge, moderate stream flows and buffer the effects of flooding. <p>Management Common to All Alternatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Actions on BLM lands would be consistent with achieving the <i>Western Montana Standards for Rangeland Health</i>.• Use the State of Montana Best Management Practices to address non point source water pollution.• Comply with the non-degradation provisions of the Montana Water Quality Act.• Work cooperatively with the State of Montana and local watershed groups in the development and implementation of Water Quality Restoration Plans.• Implement the provisions of BLM-MOU-MT923-0214 between the BLM and the MT DEQ. Coordinate with MT DEQ and communities, as requested, to develop Source Water Protection Plans. Review projects on a case-by-case basis to mitigate impacts to water quality.• Maintain water rights and instream flow reservations subject to Montana water law. Participate in the Montana Statewide water adjudication process. Comply with Montana law for water rights.• Implement watershed rehabilitation measures as soon as possible after major catastrophic natural or human-caused fire or flood events.• Obtain all necessary permits pertaining to water quality, wetlands and streams.

<p><i>Wild Horses and Burros</i></p>	<p>Goal – Promote the wild horse and burro adoption program.</p> <p>Management Common to All Alternatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no wild horse or burro herds within the planning area. • Conduct public education and compliance inspections as required for adopters in the planning area.
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RESOURCE USES			
<i>Forest Products</i>			
<p>Goal —Provide opportunities for traditional and non-traditional uses by incorporating sound ecological principles while contributing to the economic stability of the community.</p> <p>Management Common to All Alternatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate with appropriate entities pertaining to forest vitality and diversity, and/or other administrative concerns. • Conduct inventory of remaining forest lands that have not been inventoried. • Analyze the salvage of forest products resulting from wildfire, prescribed fire, forest insect/disease, or weather induced events. • Conduct salvage in a manner commensurate with forest health guidance and in consideration of other resource values. Consider removal of suitable biomass (non-commercial size products) on a case-by-case basis. • Provide the opportunity for both traditional and non-traditional use of forests and woodlands. • Stewardship opportunities would be considered on a case-by-case basis. • Management actions would not change more than 15% of lynx habitat within an LAU to an unsuitable condition within a 10-year period. Additional programmatic-specific conservation measures are found in the Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy in the Lynx section of Appendix D. 			
<i>No Action (Alternative A)</i>	<i>Alternative B</i>	<i>Alternative C</i>	<i>Alternative D</i>
<p>1. Conduct harvest treatment on up to 3,000 acres over the life of the plan on lands outside of the Pioneer and Gravelly landscape analysis with an average of 1.6 million board feet (MMBF) in annual timber production.</p> <p>Conduct harvest on lands within the Gravelly and Pioneer Landscape Analysis as described in the opportunity section of the plans. This could provide from 0.2 to 0.8 (MMBF) annually.</p> <p>Allow no timber harvest activities in the areas depicted on Map 9.</p>	<p>1. Manage 35,000 (23,000 acres without aspen) as available for harvest, with an associated annual Probable Sale Quantity (PSQ) of 6.6 MMBF (3.6 MMBF without aspen), allowing harvest in all habitat types in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • southern Ruby Mountains • south Tobacco Root Mountains • Barton/Alder Gulch. <p>Allow additional harvest across the planning area in Warm and Dry, Warm and Very Dry, and Cool and Moist habitat type groups.</p>	<p>1. Manage 19,000 acres (7,000 without aspen) as available for harvest, with an associated annual PSQ of 3.7 MMBF (0.7 MMBF without aspen) in Warm and Dry and Warm and Very Dry habitat type groups.</p>	<p>1. Manage 51,000 acres (37,000 without aspen) as available for harvest, with an associated annual PSQ of 9.6 MMBF (5.9 MMBF without aspen) allowing harvest across the planning area in Warm and Dry, Warm and Very Dry, and Cool and Moist habitat type groups.</p>

	<p>2. Evaluate thinning in lodgepole pine and/or Douglas-fir types for potential impacts to lynx habitat.</p> <p>3. Replant all disturbed sites after disturbance to reflect historic stocking rates. Monitor/resolve effects of grazing pressure on regeneration sites.</p> <p>4. Consider salvage harvest on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>5. Provide opportunities for small sale of forest products to the general public on a case-by-case basis.</p>	<p>2. Conduct commercial thinning in up to 14% of moist forest habitat types.</p> <p>3. Same as A.</p> <p>4. Consider salvage harvest in insect ridden, diseased, and burned stands, with an emphasis on pine beetle and spruce budworm infestations.</p> <p>5. Provide opportunities for small sale of forest products within same areas available for commercial harvest.</p>	<p>2. Prohibit commercial thinning in moist forest habitat types.</p> <p>3. Replant commercial sites only where necessary to mitigate negative resource effects from disturbances. Protect plantations from livestock pressure until established if necessary.</p> <p>4. Same as B.</p> <p>5. Provide opportunities for small sale of forest products where appropriate, focusing on areas of wildland-urban interface.</p>	<p>2. Conduct commercial thinning in up to 79% of moist forest habitat types.</p> <p>3. Replant all commercial sites after disturbance to reflect historic stocking rates if adequate natural regeneration is lacking. Protect plantations from livestock pressure until established if necessary.</p> <p>4. Same as A.</p> <p>5. Same as A.</p>
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<i>Lands and Realty</i>				
<p>Goal 1– Meet public needs for use authorizations such as right-of-way, leases, and permits while minimizing adverse impacts to other resource values</p> <p>Management Common to All Alternatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze requests for land use authorizations and apply mitigation measures on a case-by-case basis. Do not issue land use authorizations for uses which would involve the disposal or storage of materials which could contaminate the land (hazardous waste disposal sites, landfills, rifle ranges, etc.) Locate new right-of-way facilities within or adjacent to existing rights-of-way to the extent practical. Group new communication site users into suitable existing sites to reduce impacts and expedite application processing. Complete a site plan prior to authorizing communication site uses in new areas. Consider the use of alternative energy sources where electric power is not available. Allow owners of non-Federal land surrounded by public land managed under FLPMA a degree of access across public land which will provide for the reasonable use and enjoyment of the non-Federal land. Do not require right-of-way, leases, permits, or easements for casual use activities. Recognize pre-FLPMA rights-of-way constructed on public lands even though the authorities authorizing these uses have been repealed (i.e., 1866 ditches and canals, RS 2477 roads, etc.). When feasible, require distribution lines to be buried on public lands when within 1/4 mile of each side of the Madison River to preserve scenic quality. Abate realty-related unauthorized use through prevention, detection, and resolution. Upon settlement of trespass liability, resolve unauthorized use of public lands by termination, authorization, or sale or exchange, as appropriate. Interim management policy and guidelines for land use authorizations in WSAs would be followed as appropriate. Reclaim sites affected by unauthorized use as determined necessary. Implement the “Suggested Practices for Raptor Protection on Power Lines” (APLIC 1996) and “USFWS Interim Guidance to Avoid and Minimize Wildlife Impacts from Wind Turbines” (USFWS 2003) 				
	<i>No Action (Alternative A)</i>	<i>Alternative B</i>	<i>Alternative C</i>	<i>Alternative D</i>
	<p>1. Designate no right-of-way use areas for communication sites. There would be no requirement for new facilities located within existing communication sites to conform with existing (designated) uses (see Table 28 for designated uses).</p>	<p>1. Designate five (5) right-of-way use areas for communication sites (Armstead Mountain, Maurer Mountain, Pipe Organ, Bear Trap and Virginia City Hill). Encourage applicants for communication site facilities to locate within these use areas. Site plans would be developed for each of the above listed designated communication sites use areas and updated periodically as necessary. Any new facilities to be located within the designated right-of-way uses areas or other communication sites would need to conform with the existing (designated) use(s) for each site (see Table 28 for designated uses).</p>	<p>1. Same as B.</p>	<p>1. Same as B.</p>

	<p>2. Designate no right-of-way corridors across the planning area.</p> <p>3. Designate no right-of-way exclusion areas.</p> <p>4. Designate no avoidance areas for right-of-ways.</p> <p>5. No related action.</p>	<p>2. Designate two right-of-way corridors across the planning area as delineated in the 1992 Western Regional Corridor Study. Nominal corridor width would be 1,320 feet (1/4 mile) on each side of centerline of existing facilities, except where the alignment forms the boundary of a Special Management Area, where the width would be 2,640 feet (1/2 mile) on the side opposite that boundary. Encourage location of all electrical transmission lines 69 kV and greater and pipelines ten inches and greater within designated corridors.</p> <p>3. Designate the Bear Trap Wilderness (6,347 acres) as an exclusion area.</p> <p>4. Designate the following areas as avoidance areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 WSAs • Lewis & Clark Trail <p>A total of 123,286 acres.</p> <p>5. No related action.</p>	<p>2. Same as B.</p> <p>3. Designate the following areas as exclusion areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bear Trap Wilderness • Beaverhead Rock <p>A total of 6,467 acres.</p> <p>4. Designate the following areas as avoidance areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 WSAs • Lewis & Clark Trail • Blue Lake • Centennial Mountain • Everson Creek • Virginia City Historic District <p>A total of 145,657 acres.</p> <p>5. No related action</p>	<p>2. Same as B.</p> <p>3. Same as B.</p> <p>4. Designate the following areas as avoidance areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 WSAs <p>A total of 122,851 acres.</p> <p>5. Process FLPMA ROW reservations on all developed recreation sites not currently withdrawn from mineral entry.</p>
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Goal 2—Retain public lands with high resource values in public ownership. Adjust land ownership to consolidate public land holdings, acquire lands with high public resource values, and meet public and community needs.**Management Common to All Alternatives:**

- Public access would be maintained or improved through all land ownership adjustment transactions.
- Newly acquired lands would be managed for the highest potential purpose for which they are acquired.
- Limit direct purchase of lands to cases where no practical alternatives exist and high public values would be acquired.
- Lands acquired within special management areas with specific Congressional mandates (such as National Trails and Wilderness Areas) would be managed in conformance with established guidelines for those areas.
- Lands acquired within administratively designated special management areas such as ACEC's and SRMA's which have unique or fragile resources would be managed the same as the special management area.
- Lands acquired without special values or management goals would be managed in the same manner as comparable surrounding public lands.
- Lands and interests in lands obtained with LWCF appropriations would not be available for disposal by any means.
- Parcels of land administered by BLM and discovered through land status updates and corrections would be managed in the same manner as parcels adjacent to or in the vicinity of them in regard to retention or disposal.

	No Action (Alternative A)	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D
	<p>1. Consider land ownership adjustments on a case-by-case basis based primarily on criteria and the two zones established in the 1984 Land Pattern Review and Land Adjustment Supplement to the 1983 State Director Guidance and using exchange as the preferred means of land acquisition and disposal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage 811,000 acres as a "retention zone" generally for retention but allowing for some for disposal actions. • Manage 91,000 acres as "lands outside retention" as available for the full array of land adjustment opportunities. <p>Exercise of the right of eminent domain for securing access to public lands could be considered as an option of last resort</p> <p>2. Consider applications for R&PP transfers and airport grants on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>3. Make lands available for state grants, agricultural entries, and Indian allotments on a case-by-case basis.</p>	<p>1. Establish three (3) adjustment categories.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage 142,000 acres in Category 1 for retention and allow no disposal. • Manage 756,000 acres in Category 2 for retention but allow limited adjustment. • Manage 4,000 acres in Category 3 as available for potential disposal. <p>Exercise of the right of eminent domain for securing access to public lands could be considered as an option of last resort.</p> <p>2. Consider applications for R&PP transfers and airport grants in Categories 2 and 3 on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>3. No lands administered by the DFO would be available for state grants, agricultural entries, or Indian allotments.</p>	<p>1. Establish two (2) adjustment categories.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage 142,000 acres in Category 1 for retention and allow no disposal. • Manage 760,000 acres in Category 2 for retention but allow limited adjustment. <p>Exercise of the right of eminent domain for securing access to public lands could not be considered.</p> <p>2. Consider R&PP transfers and airport grants of public land in Category 2 on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>3. Same as B.</p>	<p>1. Same as B, except that exercise of the right of eminent domain would not be considered.</p> <p>2. Same as B.</p> <p>3. Same as B.</p>

	4. Acquire tracts identified in Dillon MFP to protect and enhance a variety of resource values see Appendix F .	4. Consider acquiring, from willing parties, lands that meet the acquisition criteria in Appendix F .	4. Same as B.	4. Same as B.
Goal 3 – Acquire and maintain access to public lands where needed to improve management efficiency and facilitate multiple use and the public’s enjoyment of these lands in coordination with other federal agencies, state and local governments, and private landowners. Management Common to All Alternatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use all methods available to acquire access from willing parties. • In conveyance documents associated with land ownership adjustments, maintain existing access to public lands using covenant language. 				
	<i>No Action (Alternative A)</i>	<i>Alternative B</i>	<i>Alternative C</i>	<i>Alternative D</i>
	<p>1. Acquire legal public or administrative access from willing landowners on a case-by-case basis as the need or opportunity arises using criteria and direction contained in the State Director Guidance on Access (USDI-BLM 1989). Focus easement acquisition in areas with completed route analyses</p> <p>Exercise of the right of eminent domain for acquisition of access could be considered as an option of last resort.</p>	<p>1. Acquire legal public or administrative access from willing landowners on a case-by-case basis as the need or opportunity arises. Focus acquisition of access by various means on routes designated as open in the travel plan that lack legal public access, and in areas classified as Category 1 and 2 for retention.</p> <p>Exercise of the right of eminent domain for acquisition of access could be considered as an option of last resort.</p>	<p>1. Same as B, except exercise of the right of eminent domain for acquisition of access would not be considered.</p>	<p>1. Same as C.</p>
Goal 4 – Utilize withdrawal actions with the least restrictive measures and minimum size necessary to accomplish the required purposes. Management Common to All Alternatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review existing withdrawals on a case-by-case basis prior to the end of the withdrawal period or as otherwise required by law to determine whether the withdrawals should be extended, revoked, or modified. • Withdrawals no longer needed, in whole or in part, for the purpose for which they were withdrawn would be revoked or modified. • Consider other agency requests for withdrawal relinquishments, extensions or modifications on a case-by-case basis. • New withdrawal proposals where the public land would transfer from one federal agency to another or where resource values or agency investments are best protected by withdrawal would be considered on a case-by-case basis. • Lands proposed to be withdrawn should be the minimum area required for the intended use and where applicable alternative prescriptions such as the use of rights-of-way, leases, permits, or cooperative agreements are inadequate to protect the resource values. • Terminate the current C&MU classification on five acres of public land at Road Agent’s Rock. • Review existing classifications on a case-by-case basis to determine if they should be continued or terminated. 				

Livestock Grazing

Goal – Manage the public rangelands to provide for a sustainable level of livestock grazing consistent with multiple use and sustained yield.

Management Common to All Alternatives:

- Actions consistent with achieving the *Western Montana Standards for Rangeland Health* would be incorporated in livestock grazing permits.
- Implement the “Revised Guidelines for Management of Domestic Sheep and Goats In Native Wild Sheep Habitats” to protect bighorn sheep habitat.
- Continue implementation of existing Allotment Management Plans (AMPs), including the associated range improvement projects and develop and implement new AMPs to direct site-specific management of livestock as evaluated through the priority watershed assessment process for rangeland health.
- Incorporate strategies from *Best Management Practices for Grazing, Montana* (DNRC 1999) where applicable.
- Conduct use supervision within staffing capabilities.
- Continue management of jointly managed FS-BLM allotments under the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest and Butte District BLM MOU for cooperative management.
- During drought conditions, normal grazing schedules and livestock management practices may need to be modified

	<i>No Action (Alternative A)</i>	<i>Alternative B</i>	<i>Alternative C</i>	<i>Alternative D</i>
	<p>1. Make 854,757 acres available for managed livestock grazing. Maintain 46,469 acres as unavailable for livestock grazing.</p> <p>2. Allocate 113,219 AUMs on 425 allotments. Use monitoring to adjust allocations by allotment in order to meet the Standards for Rangeland Health. Impose reductions in graduated steps. Allocate increases after interdisciplinary review.</p> <p>3. No term grazing permits or leases would be authorized in unallotted areas.</p>	<p>1. Make 852,778 acres available for managed livestock grazing. Approximately 48,448 acres would not be available for livestock grazing.</p> <p>2. Same as A, except potential reductions in AUMs ranging from 0-11% (101,183 AUMs), or other changes in operations would occur with full implementation of the plan.</p> <p>3. No term grazing permits or leases would be authorized in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unallotted areas • Blue Lake • Eli Springs 	<p>1. Make 835,115 acres available for livestock grazing. Approximately 66,111 acres would not be available for livestock grazing.</p> <p>2. Same as A, except potential reductions in AUMs ranging from 0-50% (56,637 AUMs), or other changes in operations, and closure of some allotments would occur.</p> <p>3. No term grazing permits or leases would be authorized in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unallotted areas • Blue Lake • Eli Springs • currently unleased allotments • Axolotl acquisition • Riverside Allotment • wetlands/waterfowl production areas in the Centennial Valley 	<p>1. Same as B.</p> <p>2. Same as A.</p> <p>3. Same as B.</p>

	<p>4. Applications for grazing use of unleased allotments, acquired lands, and relinquished or cancelled allotments would be considered on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>5. Maintain the Cross and Exchange Allotments as Resource Reserve Allotments.</p> <p>6. Consider livestock utilization of key forage species on a case-by-case basis during Allotment Management Plan development or revision.</p> <p>7. Adjust grazing as part of the allotment management planning process to protect or enhance BLM sensitive plants when livestock grazing is a contributing factor to not meeting <i>Western Montana Standards for Rangeland Health</i>.</p> <p>8. Adjust grazing as part of the allotment management planning process to protect or enhance fish habitat when livestock grazing is a contributing factor to not meeting <i>Western Montana Standards for Rangeland Health</i>.</p>	<p>4. Currently unleased lands, acquired lands, and relinquished or cancelled allotments would be evaluated to determine if they would be designated as Resource Reserve Allotments, reallocated, or classified as unavailable for livestock grazing. Priority would be given to designating Resource Reserve Allotments where the need exists.</p> <p>5. Same as A.</p> <p>6. Establish allowable use levels for grazing allotments during the watershed assessment process.</p> <p>7. Adjust grazing as part of the allotment management planning process to protect or enhance BLM sensitive plants when <i>Western Montana Standards for Rangeland Health</i> are not being met or when monitoring shows BLM sensitive plants are being impacted.</p> <p>8. Same as A. Adjust grazing or implement projects to protect concentrated spawning areas in 99% and above WCT streams.</p>	<p>4. Same as B, except acquired lands would not be reallocated.</p> <p>5. Same as A.</p> <p>6. Allow upland utilization of key forage species up to an average of 35% across all allotments. Elk winter ranges would have 30% rest on a rotational basis.</p> <p>7. Defer grazing or provide yearlong rest two years out of three on habitats supporting populations of BLM sensitive plant species susceptible to herbivory. Genera currently on the BLM sensitive plant list that are susceptible to herbivory include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Astragalus</i> • <i>Carex</i> • <i>Elymus</i> • <i>Penstemon</i> • <i>Taraxacum</i> • <i>Thalictrum</i> <p>8. Same as A. Adjust grazing or implement projects to protect WCT spawning and fry emergence between April 15 and August 15.</p>	<p>4. Same as B.</p> <p>5. Same as A.</p> <p>6. Same as A.</p> <p>7. Same as A.</p> <p>8. Same as A.</p>
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<p>9. Treatment areas will be rested from livestock grazing up to one year prior to treatment if necessary to maintain fuels for burning and for two growing seasons following treatment actions to promote recovery of vegetation. Livestock rest for less than two growing seasons may be justified on a case-by-case basis based on sound resource data and experience.</p> <p>10. No related action.</p> <p>11. Implement the Red Rock HMP.</p> <p>12. No related action.</p> <p>13. No related action.</p>	<p>9. Same as A.</p> <p>10. Small and isolated aspen restoration treatments will have management design to reduce or eliminate browsing impacts until aspen regeneration is a minimum of five feet tall on average.</p> <p>11. Provide a minimum 12-inch residual tall emergent wetland vegetation on all wetland and waterfowl production areas in the Centennial Valley.</p> <p>12. Maintain cattle as primary class of livestock on mountain mahogany habitat. Sheep grazing on mountain mahogany habitats will be mitigated through specific grazing treatments, or where necessary, eliminated.</p> <p>13. Authorize no new or converted domestic sheep permits in the following areas (depicted on Map 3) that contain suitable grizzly bear and wolf habitat:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centennial Mountains • Snowcrest Mountains • Gravelly Range • Greenhorn Mountains • Axolotl Lakes • along the Continental Divide from Monida to Lemhi Pass 	<p>9. Treatment areas will be rested from livestock grazing up to one year prior to treatment if necessary to maintain fuels for burning and for two years post treatment, followed by no growing season livestock grazing for the next three years. No increase in livestock stocking rates would result from vegetation treatments.</p> <p>10. Same as B.</p> <p>11. See #3 in this section above.</p> <p>12. Maintain cattle as the only class of livestock on all mountain mahogany habitat types unless those areas can be retired and closed to grazing.</p> <p>13. Authorize no new, transferred, or converted domestic sheep permits in the following areas that contain suitable grizzly bear and wolf habitat:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centennial Mountains • Snowcrest Mountains • Gravelly Range • Greenhorn Mountains • Axolotl Lakes • along the Continental Divide from Monida to Lemhi Pass 	<p>9. Same as A.</p> <p>10. Same as B.</p> <p>11. Same as A.</p> <p>12. Same as B.</p> <p>13. No related action.</p>
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<i>Minerals - Leasable</i>				
Goal 1 – Advance dependable, affordable, and environmentally responsible production and distribution of leasable minerals by identifying lands appropriate for lease and development.				
Management Common to All Alternatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow interim management policy and guidelines for mineral leasing in WSAs as appropriate. All public lands available for oil and gas leasing will be offered first by competitive bid at an oral auction. Appropriate stipulations, terms, and conditions will be applied at the time of leasing. 				
	<i>No Action (Alternative A)</i>	<i>Alternative B</i>	<i>Alternative C</i>	<i>Alternative D</i>
<i>Oil and Gas</i>	1. Manage 426,335 acres as open to leasing, subject to standard lease terms. 2. Manage 580,750 acres as open to leasing, subject to CSU/TL stipulations. 3. Manage 218,210 acres as open to leasing subject to No Surface Occupancy (NSO).	1. Manage 143,420 acres as open to leasing, subject to standard lease terms. 2. Manage 632,061 acres as open to leasing, subject to CSU/TL stipulations. 3. Manage 433,797 acres as open to leasing subject to No Surface Occupancy (NSO).	1. Manage 127,687 acres as open to leasing, subject to standard lease terms. 2. Manage 19,614 acres as open to leasing, subject to CSU/TL stipulations. 3. Manage 120,840 acres as open to leasing subject to No Surface Occupancy (NSO).	1. Manage 272,168 acres as open to leasing, subject to standard lease terms. 2. Manage 822,971 acres as open to leasing, subject to CSU/TL stipulations. 3. Manage 115,648 acres as open to leasing subject to No Surface Occupancy (NSO).

	<p>4. Manage 129,316 acres as closed to leasing in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 WSAs • Bear Trap Wilderness 	<p>4. Manage 145,554 acres as closed to leasing in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 WSAs • Bear Trap Wilderness • National Historic Landmarks • Lands administered by ARS 	<p>4. Manage 1,086,596 acres as closed to leasing in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 WSAs • Bear Trap Wilderness • State Game Ranges • Lands administered by ARS • sage grouse winter/spring • 1/2 mi of sage grouse leks • Big Game winter range • Big Game birthing areas • Bighorn sheep range and core areas • 1 mile of bald eagle nests • 1/2 mile of raptor breeding • 1/2 mile of waterfowl production • wetland projects • 1 mile of peregrine breeding • 1/2 mile of ferruginous hawk nesting • westslope cutthroat trout habitat 90-100% pure • eligible cultural properties/districts • traditional cultural properties • known paleontological sites • 1 mile of National Historic Trails • Continental Divide Scenic Trail • suitable WSRs 	<p>4. Manage 143,857 acres as closed to leasing in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 WSAs • Bear Trap Wilderness • Lands administered by ARS
	No Action (Alternative A)	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D
<i>Coal and Oil Shale</i>	<p>1. Consider proposals for coal or oil shale leasing on a case-by-case basis for all federal mineral estate within the planning area.</p>	1. Same as A.	1. Same as A.	1. Same as A.

	<i>No Action (Alternative A)</i>	<i>Alternative B</i>	<i>Alternative C</i>	<i>Alternative D</i>
<i>Phosphate and other solids</i>	<p>1. Manage an estimated 1,229,705 acres of federal mineral estate as open for solid mineral leasing.</p> <p>2. Manage an estimated 125,129 acres as closed to leasing.</p> <p>3. Monitor reclamation of the phosphate mine in the Centennial Mountains.</p>	<p>1. Manage an estimated 1,230,599 acres of federal mineral estate as open for solid mineral leasing.</p> <p>2. Manage an estimated 124,235 acres as closed to leasing.</p> <p>3. Same as A.</p>	<p>1. Same as B.</p> <p>2. Same as B.</p> <p>3. Same as A.</p>	<p>1. Same as B.</p> <p>2. Same as B.</p> <p>3. Same as A.</p>
<i>Geothermal</i>	<p>1. Lands in the planning area would be available for geothermal leasing, unless located within wilderness or WSAs or instances where it is determined that issuing the lease would cause unnecessary or undue degradation to public lands or resources.</p>	<p>1. Same as A.</p>	<p>1. Same as A.</p>	<p>1. Same as A.</p>
Goal 2 – Allow environmentally responsible geophysical exploration for energy resources in the Dillon FO on lands administered by the BLM.				
Management Common to All Alternatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Notices of Intent and develop mitigation measures so as not to create undue and unnecessary degradation. 				
	<i>No Action (Alternative A)</i>	<i>Alternative B</i>	<i>Alternative C</i>	<i>Alternative D</i>
	<p>1. Restrict vehicular oil and gas geophysical exploration on 65,544 acres in the following areas as shown on Map 31:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> East Fork of Blacktail Deer Creek Centennial Mountains Upper Clark Canyon Axlotl Lakes Area Madison River Big Hole River on unstable and highly erodible soils on paleontological sites <p>Travel limitations as described on Maps 44 and 45 would also be applied.</p> <p>2. Evaluate oil and gas geophysical exploration in the remainder of the DFO on a case-by-case basis.</p>	<p>1. Apply travel limitations as described on Maps 47 and 48 to oil and gas geophysical exploration and consider exceptions as described in Appendix I on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>2. Use oil and gas lease stipulations as starting point to develop mitigation measures for each NOI. Consider geophysical exploration in areas closed to leasing or with NSO and/or timing restrictions based on the nature of impacts identified in site-specific analysis.</p>	<p>1. Apply travel limitations as described on Maps 49 and 50 (oversized) to oil and gas geophysical exploration and consider exceptions as described in Appendix I on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>2. Same as B.</p>	<p>1. Apply travel limitations as described on Maps 51 and 52 (oversized) to oil and gas geophysical exploration and consider exceptions as described in Appendix I on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>2. Same as B.</p>

Minerals - Locatable				
<p>Goal – Encourage and facilitate development of locatable minerals in the manner to prevent undue and unnecessary degradation. Management Common to All Alternatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate with Montana Department of Environmental Quality during the review and approval of mining operations. • Within constraints of the mining law, apply terms and conditions to all areas open to locatable mineral entry to meet the <i>Western Montana Standards for Range-land Health</i>. • Analyze all recommendations regarding disposal or withdrawal of lands on a case-by-case basis for mineral potential (ie. mineral character) of each tract before any decision is finalized. • Comply with all state and federal laws. Continue administration of locatable minerals as required by law and regulation (43 CFR 3809) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review and process notices to ensure the proposed action does not create unnecessary or undue degradation of the environment. - Review and process plans of operation to ensure the proposed action does not create unnecessary or undue degradation of the environment. - Conduct at a minimum annual compliance inspections on each active notice and plan of operation. - Allow casual use where work is done by hand and no explosives are used. Refer inquiries to appropriate agencies for further guidance on other permit requirements. 				
	No Action (Alternative A)	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D
	1. Manage approximately 30,000 acres of federal mineral estate currently withdrawn as closed to locatable mineral entry.	1. Same as A.	1. Same as A.	1. Same as A.

	<p>2. Withdraw the following areas from locatable mineral management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Road Agent Rock (10 acres) • Squirrel Rock (10 acres) • Wedding Ring Rock (10 acres) • Public lands in the Centennial Mountains east of Matsingale Creek (12,270 acres) <p>No areas would be withdrawn under special management</p>	<p>2. Withdraw the following areas from locatable mineral entry under standard management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christnot Mill (20 acres) • Developed Recreation Sites (797 acres) • Lewis's Lookout (160 acres) • Land along Madison River between Warm Springs and planning boundary (1,609 acres) • Road Agent Rock (10 acres) • Squirrel Rock (10 acres) • Wedding Ring Rock (10 acres) <p>Withdraw the following areas as part of special management of ACECs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beaverhead Rock (120 acres) • Everson Creek (2,160 acres) • Virginia City (513 acres) 	<p>2. Withdraw the following areas from locatable mineral entry under standard management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Axolotl Lakes watershed, including Blue Lake (1,117 acres) • Beaverhead Rock (120 acres) • Christnot Mill (20 acres) • Developed Recreation Sites (797 acres) • Everson Creek area (2160 acres) • Lewis's Lookout (480 acres) • Land along Madison River between Cliff Lake and planning boundary (4,661 acres) • Muddy Creek area (13,097 acres) • Road Agent Rock (10 acres) • Squirrel Rock (10 acres) • Virginia City (513 acres) • Wedding Ring Rock (10 acres) • Westslope cutthroat trout streams 90% and above (3,507 acres) <p>No areas would be withdrawn under special management.</p>	<p>2. Withdraw the following areas from locatable mineral entry under standard management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lewis's Lookout (40 acres) • Road Agent Rock (10 acres) • Squirrel Rock (10 acres) • Wedding Ring Rock (10 acres) <p>Withdraw the following areas as part of special management of ACECs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beaverhead Rock (120 acres) • Everson Creek (8,608 acres) • Virginia City (513 acres)
			<p>3. Manage federal mineral estate underlying R&PP conveyances as unavailable for mineral entry. Manage the remainder of split federal mineral estate as open to locatable mineral entry, subject to the provisions of 43 CFR 3814.</p>	<p>3. Same as B.</p>
	<p>3. Maintain federal mineral interests underlying R&PP, FLPMA exchange, FLPMA sales, and Small Tract Act conveyances as unavailable for mineral entry.</p>			<p>3. Same as B.</p>

<i>Mineral Materials</i>				
Goal –Provide for the extraction of mineral materials to meet public demand, while minimizing adverse impacts to other resource values.				
Management Common to All Alternatives:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain currently authorized mineral material sites unless circumstances dictate they should be closed. 				
	<i>No Action (Alternative A)</i>	<i>Alternative B</i>	<i>Alternative C</i>	<i>Alternative D</i>
	<p>1. Manage 129,204 acres as closed to mineral material disposal in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bear Trap Wilderness all WSAs 	<p>1. Manage 136,226 acres as closed to mineral material disposal in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bear Trap Wilderness Centennial Sandhills Christnot Mill Developed recreation sites Lands within 1/4 mile either side of Big Sheep Creek Road, except in sections 26 and 35 in T14S, R10W and section 2 in T15S, R10W Lewis's Lookout all WSAs (except Tobacco Root Tack-Ons) Sheep Creek Common Use Area <p>2. Manage 765,012 acres of BLM-administered land as open to mineral material disposal.</p> <p>Consider new locations outside of closed areas on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>Apply terms, conditions, or other special considerations needed to protect resources in open areas, as identified in Appendix H.</p>	<p>1. Manage entire planning area as closed to mineral material disposal except for currently authorized sites.</p> <p>2. Manage currently authorized sites (681 acres of BLM-administered land) as open to mineral material disposal.</p> <p>Establish no new mineral material sites during the life of the plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bear Trap Wilderness all WSAs (except Tobacco Root Tack-Ons) 	<p>1. Manage 128,285 acres as closed to mineral material disposal in the following areas:</p> <p>2. Manage 772,941 acres as open to mineral material disposal and actively identify available mineral material locations for future use.</p> <p>Apply terms, conditions, or other special considerations needed to protect resources in open areas, as identified in Appendix H.</p>

Recreation				
<p>Goal 1—Provide a diverse array of quality, resource based recreation opportunities while protecting and interpreting the resource values, providing educational opportunities, minimizing user conflicts, and promoting public safety.</p> <p>Management Common to All Alternatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BLM-administered land in the planning area would be managed for a variety of recreation opportunities (i.e., hunting, fishing, sightseeing, off-highway vehicle use, horseback riding, mountain biking, hiking, rafting, rockhounding, etc.) consistent with other resource management objectives. • Implement the Lower Madison River Recreation Area Management Plan (USDI-BLM 2003a) and the Missouri-Madison Comprehensive Recreation Plan (Dames & Moore 1996, revised PPL Montana, LLC 2001) to manage lands in the lower Madison River corridor. • Complete the evaluation and update of the Bear Trap Canyon Wilderness Management Plan (USDI-BLM 1984a) and begin implementation. • Provide appropriate protection of significant cave resources identified in the planning area in accordance with the Federal Cave Resource Protection Act of 1988. 				
	No Action (Alternative A)	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D
	<p>1. Manage public lands in the Big Hole River corridor by implementing the <i>Lower Big Hole River Recreation Area Management Plan</i> (USDI-BLM 1987b).</p> <p>2. Manage Axolotl Lakes acquisition lands under interim management as described in BLM EA #MT-050-2001-13 for the Axolotl Lakes land exchange.</p> <p>3. Maintain and/or improve the quality and quantity of sport fishing opportunities on public lands.</p>	<p>1. Develop additional recreational support facilities at Maiden Rock Boat Launch site in addition to implementing the <i>Lower Big Hole River Recreation Area Management Plan</i> (USDI-BLM 1987b).</p> <p>2. Prepare and implement a management plan in cooperation with FWP for Axolotl Lakes acquisition lands consistent with other provisions in this respective alternative.</p> <p>3. Establish use levels for BLM launch sites in coordination with FWP to manage for quality opportunities.</p>	<p>1. Same as A</p> <p>2. Same as B.</p> <p>3. Same as B.</p>	<p>1. Same as B.</p> <p>2. Same as B.</p> <p>3. Same as A</p>

	<p>4. Maintain eight (8) currently designated SRMAs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Axolotl Lakes • Bear Trap/Red Mtn • Big Sheep Creek • Centennial Mtns. • East Fork Blacktail • Upper Madison River • Lower Big Hole River • Ruby Reservoir <p>A total of 87,600 acres.</p>	<p>4. Maintain seven (7) SRMAs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Axolotl Lakes • Lower Madison • Big Sheep Creek • Centennial Mtns. • East Fork Blacktail • Upper Madison River • Lower Big Hole River <p>Drop one (1) SRMA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ruby Reservoir <p>Designate three (3) new SRMAs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Pioneers • Rocky Hills (if released) • Ruby Mountains <p>A total of 166,388 acres.</p>	<p>4. Maintain seven (7) SRMAs</p> <p>Axolotl Lakes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower Madison • Big Sheep Creek • Centennial Mtns. • East Fork Blacktail • Upper Madison River • Lower Big Hole River <p>Drop one (1) SRMA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ruby Reservoir <p>A total of 74,700 acres.</p>	<p>4. Maintain seven (7) SRMAs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Axolotl Lakes • Lower Madison • Big Sheep Creek • Centennial Mtns. • East Fork Blacktail • Upper Madison River • Lower Big Hole River <p>Drop one (1) SRMA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ruby Reservoir <p>Designate three (3) new SRMAs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Pioneers • Rocky Hills (if released) • Ruby Mountains <p>A total of 166,388 acres.</p>
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Goal 2—Develop and maintain appropriate recreation facilities, balancing public demand, protection of Public Land resources, and fiscal responsibility.

Management Common to All Alternatives:

- All existing recreation facilities would be maintained and managed, some in partnership with other agencies or groups.
- Emphasis would be placed on providing interpretive and informational signs and materials for public lands visitors, maintaining existing facilities to a high standard consistent with the recreational setting, and limiting development of additional facilities to those areas where public recreational use of surrounding public lands requires them.
- Consider rental of existing cabins/facilities on public land for public recreational use on a case-by-case basis.
- Non-motorized recreational trails would be constructed and/or maintained as funding and staffing allow. Priority for this work would include the East Fork Blacktail Deer Creek area and the Ruby Mountains.

Goal 3—Issue special recreation permits in an equitable manner for specific recreational uses of the public lands and related waters as a means to minimize user conflicts, control visitor use, to protect recreation resources, and to provide for private and commercial recreation use.				
Management Common to All Alternatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage special recreation permits in accordance with federal regulations, special stipulations, and established terms and conditions. 				
	<i>No Action (Alternative A)</i>	<i>Alternative B</i>	<i>Alternative C</i>	<i>Alternative D</i>
	1. Accept no applications for special recreation permits that require additional analysis. 2. No related action.	1. Evaluate applications for recreational related activities other than outfitted big game hunting on a case-by-case basis. 2. Manage outfitted big game hunting permits based on Outfitter Permit Areas (OPAs) and maintain current levels of permitted outfitter use (visitor use days): Blacktail Mountains/Sage Creek: 150 Centennial Mountains and Valley: 490 E. Pioneers/Highland Mountains: 90 Horse Prairie/Tendoy's/Big Sheep Creek: 550 Madison River: 140 Ruby Mountain/Sweetwater: 60 Tobacco Root Mountains: 20	1. Same as B. 2. Manage outfitted big game hunting permits based on Outfitter Permit Areas (OPAs) and decrease current levels of permitted outfitter use by 15%. Blacktail Mountains/Sage Creek: 127 Centennial Mountains and Valley: 416 E. Pioneers/Highland Mountains: 76 Horse Prairie/Tendoy's/Big Sheep Creek: 467 Madison River: 119 Ruby Mountain/Sweetwater: 51 Tobacco Root Mountains: 17	1. Same as B. 2. Manage outfitted big game hunting permits based on Outfitter Permit Areas (OPAs) and increase the total # of permitted outfitters use days in 3 OPAs. Blacktail Mountains/Sage Creek: 295 Centennial Mountains and Valley: 490 E. Pioneers/Highland Mountains: 150 Horse Prairie/Tendoy's/Big Sheep Creek: 550 Madison River: 140 Ruby Mountain/Sweetwater: 100 Tobacco Root Mountains: 20
Goal 4—Develop and maintain cooperative relationships with National, State, and local recreation providers, tourism entities, and local recreational groups.				
Management Common to All Alternatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain cooperation with a variety of user groups, especially in the local area, to provide diverse recreational opportunities for enjoyment of public lands. Promote and support recreation-based tourism. Complete development and maintenance of sites identified in the 2002 FERC re-licensing agreement for the Missouri-Madison hydroelectric project 				

<i>Renewable Energy</i>				
<p>Goal 1—Provide opportunities for the development of renewable energy resources from sources such as wind, biomass, solar, and low-impact hydropower while minimizing adverse impacts to other resource values.</p> <p>Management Common to All Alternatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposals for renewable energy development would be analyzed on a case-by-case basis. Although no areas would be specifically designated for renewable energy development, opportunities for such development would be provided to the extent consistent with other goals, objectives, and requirements of the plan. Adopt BMPs related to renewable energy development, including but not limited to those proposed in the Programmatic Wind Energy EIS, when and where applicable. 				
	<i>No Action (Alternative A)</i>	<i>Alternative B</i>	<i>Alternative C</i>	<i>Alternative D</i>
	1. For renewable energy projects requiring rights-of-way, no lands would be managed as designated right-of-way avoidance and exclusion areas, nor would any areas be designated as right-of-way corridors or communication site use areas.	1. For renewable energy projects requiring rights-of-way, take into account designated right-of-way avoidance and exclusion areas as well as designated right-of-way corridors and use areas.	1. Same as Alternative B.	1. Same as Alternative B.

<p><i>Transportation and Facilities</i></p>	<p>Goal—Manage facilities, including roads and trails, to provide for public access or administrative needs, while maintaining or protecting resource values, in coordination with other federal agencies, state and local governments, and private landowners.</p> <p>Management Common to All Alternatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inventory system roads and other facilities and maintain to BLM standards within assigned maintenance levels and to meet public health and safety requirements. • Maintain non-system roads on a case-by-case basis. • Analyze new road, trail or facility construction on a case-by case basis. • Construct new temporary roads to minimum standards necessary. • Close and rehabilitate non-essential roads where problems exist, if the expenditure of funds is justified.
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<i>Travel Management and OHV Use</i>				
<p>Goal – In coordination with other federal agencies, state and local governments, and private landowners, manage motorized travel to provide recreational experiences while maintaining or protecting resource values.</p> <p>Management Common to All Alternatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Across all alternatives BLM will promote the use of shared trails whenever possible. • Travel in the Centennial Mountains would be managed in accordance with the Centennial Mountain Travel Management Plan approved in February 2001. • Development or construction of motorized and/or mountain bike routes are acknowledged within this plan as a future need and will be considered in area-specific planning. Opportunities for motorized travel have been identified in the south end of the Pioneer Mountains to create loop routes to connect public and Forest Service roads. 				
<i>No Action (Alternative A)</i>	<i>Alternative B</i>	<i>Alternative C</i>	<i>Alternative D</i>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Designate 0 acres as open, 854,250 acres as limited, and 46,976 acres as closed to OHV use. 2. Designate 2,102 miles of road across BLM as open to OHV use. 3. Designate 822,844 acres open and 78,402 acres closed to snowmobile use. 4. Allow for exceptions to designated route travel as identified in Appendix I. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Designate 0 acres open, 826,876 acres limited, and 74,350 acres closed to OHV use. 2. Designate 1,342 miles of road across BLM as open to OHV use. 3. Designate 763,057 acres open to snowmobile use and 138,169 acres closed to snowmobile use. 4. Same as A. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Designate 0 acres open, 807,981 acres limited, and 93,245 acres closed to OHV use. 2. Designate 1,116 miles of road across BLM as open to OHV use. 3. Designate 757,699 acres as open to snowmobile use and 143,547 acres as closed to snowmobile use. 4. Same as A. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Same as A. 2. Designate 1,465 miles of road across BLM as open to OHV use. 3. Same as A. 4. Same as A, except also allow for motorized use of restricted roads (no cross-country travel) for game retrieval between the hours of 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. during big game hunting season. 	

Utility and Communication Corridors

Goal – Encourage the use of designated right-of-way corridors and use areas to the extent practical in order to minimize adverse environmental impacts and the proliferation of separate rights-of-way.

See *Lands and Realty* section.

FIRE MANAGEMENT AND ECOLOGY**Wildland Fire**

Goal—Provide the appropriate management response on all wildland fires with an emphasis on firefighter and public safety. When assigning priorities, base decisions on relative values to be protected commensurate with fire management costs.

Management Common to All Alternatives:

- The Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest and the DNRC will implement fire preparedness, prevention, and suppression on BLM land through the interagency offset and six party fire protection agreement.
- Implement an aerial detection plan in cooperation with other fire management agencies.
- Restrict equipment use in wilderness and wilderness study areas in accordance with minimum impact suppression tactics. Follow the interim management policy and guidelines for lands under wilderness review (H-8550-1).
- Manage naturally ignited wildland fires in the Bear Trap Unit of the Lee Metcalf Wilderness Area under the prescription guidelines established in the Bear Trap Unit of the Lee Metcalf Wilderness Area Fire Management Plan.
- Fire management activities would be prioritized by their risk to life and property across the planning area. Fires that are adjacent or near wildland urban interface would have the highest priority for fire suppression.
- Refer to **Appendix J** for Fire Management Zone and Category descriptions.

	No Action (Alternative A)	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D
	<p>1. Determine the appropriate management response based on the following area designations of Control Areas, Confinement Area A and Confinement Area B:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage the approximately 40% of the planning area as Control Areas. Take immediate action with sufficient forces to suppress a fire within the first burning period. Manage approximately 60% of the planning area as Confinement Areas. In Confinement Areas A use natural and/or preconstructed barriers or environmental conditions to confine a fire and manage for desired results before implementing full suppression, with no acreage limitations. In Confinement Area B use natural and/or preconstructed barriers or environmental conditions to confine a fire and manage for desired results until acreage limitations are reached, then take suppression action. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 acres in Fuel Type H (lighter stocked conifers); • 250 acres in Fuel Type L (perennial grasses) • 10 acres in Fuel Type G (dense conifers) • 250 acres in Fuel Type T (sage/ grass) 	<p>1. Take appropriate management response on all man-caused and natural fire in accordance with Fire Management Categories A through D.</p> <p>Designate approximately 37,573 acres as Fire Management Category A.</p> <p>Designate approximately 72,867 acres as Fire Management Category B.</p> <p>Designate approximately 776,925 acres as Fire Management Category C.</p> <p>Designate approximately 13,665 acres as Fire Management Category D.</p>	<p>1. Take appropriate management response on all man-caused and natural fire in accordance with the Fire Management Categories A through D.</p> <p>Designate approximately 37,573 acres as Fire Management Category A.</p> <p>Designate approximately 26,728 acres as Fire Management Category B.</p> <p>Designate approximately 70, 296 acres as Fire Management Category C.</p> <p>Designate approximately 766,433 acres as Fire Management Category D.</p> <p>Focus wildfire suppression efforts on large Class 3 or 4 stands of sagebrush that are isolated from other dense stands</p>	<p>1. Take appropriate management response on all man-caused and natural fire in accordance with the Fire Management Categories A through D.</p> <p>Designate approximately 93,152 as Fire Management Category A.</p> <p>Designate approximately 581,383 acres as Fire Management Category B.</p> <p>Designate approximately 226,669 acres as Fire Management Category C.</p> <p>Manage 0 acres under Fire Management Category D.</p>

Prescribed Fire				
Goal —Restore and maintain desired ecological conditions and fuel loadings through use of prescribed fire, wildland fire, and other treatment methods.				
Management Common to All Alternatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restrict equipment use in wilderness and wilderness study areas in accordance with minimum impact suppression tactics. Follow the interim management policy and guidelines for lands under wilderness review (H-8550-1). • Place priority on fuels reduction in wildland urban interface areas. • Prioritize treatments based on comparing historical fire regimes and current fire severity. • Maintain fire dependent ecosystems and restore those outside their natural balance through mechanical, chemical, and prescribed fire treatments. • Coordinate all vegetation treatment projects with FWP and adjacent landowners. 				
	No Action (Alternative A)	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D
	1. Implement prescribed fire following timber harvest on a case-by-case basis. 2. Implement treatment of aspen with prescribed fire on a case-by-case basis 3. Implement prescribed burn treatment of conifer encroachment in non-forest vegetation on a case-by-case basis. 4. Implement prescribed burn treatments of sagebrush steppe on a case-by-case basis. 5. Allow wildland fire from natural ignitions to burn for resource benefits within Category D areas. 6. No related action.	1-4. See Resources, Vegetation sections for <i>Forests and Woodlands</i> , and <i>Rangeland</i> for the number of acres to be treated. 5. Allow wildland fire from natural ignitions to burn for resource benefits within Confinement Area A and Confinement Area B until acreage limitations are met. 6. Use prescribed burning to treat warm/dry forested habitat types and conifer encroachment within wilderness study areas where treatment would enhance wilderness values and restore the role of fire to the WSAs.	1-4. Same as B. 5. Same as B. 6. No related action.	1-4. Same as B. 5. No related action. 6. Same as B.

<i>Rehabilitation</i>				
Goal 1 – Use rehabilitation to mitigate the adverse effects of fire on the soil, vegetation, and water resources in a cost effective manner.				
	<i>No Action (Alternative A)</i>	<i>Alternative B</i>	<i>Alternative C</i>	<i>Alternative D</i>
	1. Implement emergency fire rehabilitation activities on a case-by-case basis.	1. Implement emergency fire rehabilitation activities as specified in Appendix J .	1. Same as B.	1. Same as B.

SPECIAL DESIGNATIONS				
<i>Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs)</i>				
Goal —Protect relevant and important values through ACEC designation and apply special management where standard or routine management is not adequate to protect the values from risks or threats of damage/degradation or to provide for public safety from natural hazards.				
Management Common to All Alternatives: None.				
	<i>No Action (Alternative A)</i>	<i>Alternative B</i>	<i>Alternative C</i>	<i>Alternative D</i>
	<p>1. Designate no ACECs. Conduct a case-by-case review of proposed actions in the following 13 areas that meet the relevance and importance criteria to protect human life and safety or significant resources from degradation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beaverhead Rock • Big Sheep Creek • Block Mountain • Blue Lake • Centennial Mountains • Centennial Sandhills • Centennial Valley Wetlands • Everson Creek • Ferruginous Hawk Nesting Area • Lewis & Clark Trail • Muddy Creek/Big Sheep Creek • Virginia City Historic District • Westslope Cutthroat Trout Habitats with greater than 99% purity 	<p>1. Designate 8 areas totaling 73,184 acres as ACECs in need of special management, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beaverhead Rock • Block Mountain • Blue Lake • Centennial Mountains • Centennial Sandhills • Everson Creek • Muddy Creek/Big Sheep Creek • Virginia City Historic District 	<p>1. Designate 2 areas totaling 9,701 acres as ACECs in need of special management, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Block Mountain • Centennial Sandhills 	<p>1. Designate 13 areas totaling 227,067 acres as ACECs in need of special management, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beaverhead Rock • Big Sheep Creek • Block Mountain • Blue Lake • Centennial Mountains • Centennial Sandhills • Centennial Valley Wetlands • Everson Creek • Ferruginous Hawk Nesting Area • Lewis & Clark Trail • Muddy Creek/Big Sheep Creek • Virginia City Historic District • Westslope Cutthroat Trout Habitats with greater than 99% purity

Back Country Byways				
Goal —Highlight and interpret scenic, historic, archaeological, or other interest values associated with Back Country Byways in partnership with communities, interest groups, and state and federal agencies.				
	<i>No Action (Alternative A)</i>	<i>Alternative B</i>	<i>Alternative C</i>	<i>Alternative D</i>
	1. Continue designation of the Big Sheep Creek National Back Country Byway (approximately 50 miles). Implement the plan developed for the Byway, with additional emphasis placed on coordinating with local residents in that area to develop information and interpretive materials for visitors to the byway that highlight multiple uses of public lands and land stewardship in the area.	1. Same as A.	1. Undesignate the Big Sheep Creek Back Country Byway.	1. Same as A.
National Recreation Areas				
None within the planning area.				
National Trails				
Goal – Assist in cooperative efforts to manage current and future national trails to protect the values for which they were designated.				
Management Common to All Alternatives:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The BLM managed portions of the Congressionally-designated Continental Divide National Scenic Trail would be completed through the Centennial Mountains, and signed and maintained to allow the public to enjoy the trail while maintaining the surrounding natural beauty of the corridor and the opportunity for a relatively primitive recreation opportunity. The CDNST, and its tributary trails located on BLM lands and identified for maintenance in the Centennial Mountains Travel Management Plan (USDI-BLM 2001a) would receive highest priority in the DFO planning area for maintenance and/or reconstruction as described in that plan. The Bear Trap Canyon National Recreation Trail would also receive the same level of maintenance and management priority as the CDNST, and would be similarly maintained to preserve the surrounding scenic values and opportunities for primitive recreation opportunities within the Bear Trap Canyon Wilderness. National Historic Trails located on public lands in the planning area, including portions of the Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) and Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail would be managed to protect and enhance their historic values. Opportunities for interpretation would be considered on a case-by-case basis. 				
	<i>No Action (Alternative A)</i>	<i>Alternative B</i>	<i>Alternative C</i>	<i>Alternative D</i>
<i>Lewis and Clark Trail</i>	1. Manage 4.4 miles of the 16 miles of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail and associated viewshed in the Horse Prairie area under VRM Class III.	1. Same as A.	1. Manage 4.4 miles of the 16 miles of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail and associated viewshed in the Horse Prairie area under VRM Class II.	1. Same as A.

Wild and Scenic Rivers				
Goal – Identify river segments suitable for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System.				
Management Common to All Alternatives: None.				
	No Action (Alternative A)	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D
	<p>1. Manage the eight (8) eligible river segments to protect the free-flow, outstandingly remarkable values, and tentative classification. Do not complete suitability review. Conduct a case-by-case review of proposed actions in eligible rivers or river segments and apply protective management, subject to valid existing rights.</p> <p>Eligible rivers include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bear Creek • Beaverhead River • Big Hole River (2 segments) • Big Sheep Creek • Madison River (3 segments) 	<p>1. Recommend none of the eight (8) eligible river segments as suitable for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.</p>	<p>1. Recommend all of the eight (8) eligible river segments as suitable for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Systems.</p>	<p>1. Same as B.</p>
Wilderness				
Goal –Manage designated wilderness areas for the preservation of natural conditions and processes, and to provide opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.				
Management Common to All Alternatives:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage the Bear Trap Unit of the Lee Metcalf Wilderness as designated wilderness according to direction provided by the BLM Manual H-8560-1, <i>Management of Designated Wilderness Areas</i>. Implement the <i>Wilderness Management Plan for Bear Trap Canyon Unit of Lee Metcalf Wilderness</i> (USDI-BLM 1984a) and the <i>Limits of Acceptable Change Management Direction, Bear Trap Canyon Unit</i> (USDI-BLM 1991c). 				

<i>Wilderness Study Areas</i>				
<p>Goal – Manage wilderness study areas (WSAs) so as not to impair their suitability for preservation as wilderness until such time as Congress either designates them as wilderness or releases them from further study.</p> <p>Management Common to All Alternatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Farlin Creek WSA studied under Section 202 of FLPMA as well as all WSAs studied under Section 603 of FLPMA would continue to be managed according to the Interim Management Policy to meet the non-impairment standard until such time as Congress either designates them as wilderness or releases them from further consideration as wilderness. Those areas designated wilderness by Congress will be managed according to a wilderness management plan written specifically for that area. Those areas released from further consideration as wilderness would be managed consistent with prescriptions identified in the release provisions specified in Appendix M. 				
	<i>No Action (Alternative A)</i>	<i>Alternative B</i>	<i>Alternative C</i>	<i>Alternative D</i>
	1. Manage the Tobacco Root Tack-on WSA, studied under Section 202 of FLPMA, under interim management.	1. Release the Tobacco Root Tack-on WSA, studied under Section 202 of FLPMA, from interim management and manage lands as provided for in this land use plan.	1. Same as B.	1. Same as B.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS	
<i>Economics</i>	
Goal – Provide for a diverse array of stable economic opportunities in an environmentally sound manner.	
Management Common to All Alternatives:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess impacts of project proposals on a case-by-case basis. 	
<i>Environmental Justice</i>	
Goal – Identify and remediate to the extent possible disproportionate negative effects to minority or low income populations per Executive Order 12898—“Federal Action to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations”.	
Management Common to All Alternatives: Assess impacts of project proposals on a case-by-case basis.	
<i>Health and Safety–Abandoned Mine Lands</i>	
Goal – Protect humans and the environment from exposure to abandoned mine lands while considering associated resource values such as historic resources.	
Management Common to All Alternatives:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take appropriate action on historic mine sites that present serious threats to the environment and pose safety risks to the public. Prioritize reclamation based on the inventory of sites and the degree of threat to human health, the environment, and public safety. Conduct reclamation in accordance with the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan. 	
<i>Health and Safety–Debris Flows</i>	
There are no current concerns with debris flows in the planning area.	
<i>Health and Safety–Hazardous Materials</i>	
Goal –Protect humans and the environment from exposure to hazardous materials.	
Management Common to All Alternatives:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comply with all appropriate laws and regulations regarding hazardous materials. Do not permit unauthorized storage, treatment, or disposal of hazardous waste on public lands. Respond to hazardous materials incidents and sites using standard operating procedures. Conduct cleanups and reclamation in accordance with the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan or the National Environmental Policy Act. 	

Indian Trust Resources
There are no Indian Trust Resource in the planning area. See Cultural Resources and Tribal Treaty Rights sections for discussion on traditional use areas and off-reservation treaty rights.
Social
Goal – Provide for a diverse array of activities that result in social benefits while minimizing negative social effects.
Management Common to All Alternatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assess impacts of project proposals on a case-by-case basis. See objectives and actions in other sections.
Tribal Treaty Rights
Goal –Accommodate treaty and legal rights of appropriate Native American groups in management of public lands.
Management Common to All Alternatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Notify and consult with Native American tribes to provide for treaty uses of public lands.

Table 13
Summary Comparison of Impacts

RESOURCES	<i>No Action (Alternative A)</i>	<i>Alternative B</i>	<i>Alternative C</i>	<i>Alternative D</i>
<i>Air Quality</i>	Air quality would be protected though short-term impacts could occur from fire events, prescribed fire activities, slash burning, or dust generated by activities such as motorized use or mining.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.
<i>Cultural Resources</i>	Provides protection and attention to cultural resources through both Section 106 compliance activities and proactive management.	Provides more protection and attention to cultural resources than A and D. Would increase amount of cultural resource information base through increased proactive inventory, but less inventory than Alternative C.	Provides the most protection and attention to cultural resources. Provides the largest increase in cultural resource information with more proactive inventory than A, B, or D.	Provides less protection and attention to cultural resources than B and C, but focuses on priority watersheds to provide for more comprehensive management in concert with other resources.
<i>Fish and Wildlife</i>	More designated motorized routes in this alternative provide the most access to areas where indirect impacts can occur from vandalism, etc.	Provides better protection from indirect impacts resulting from designated motorized routes than A or D, but less than C.	Least number of designated motorized routes provides best protection from indirect impacts to cultural resources.	Provides better protection from indirect impacts related to use of designated motorized routes than A but less than B or C.
<i>Fish</i>	Would take longer than Alternatives B and C to achieve DFC. Protects fish habitat using watershed planning and rangeland health standards, implementing habitat improvements projects where site-specific assessments have identified habitat concerns.	Would reach DFC sooner than Alternative A, but after Alternative C. Similar to Alternative A, but provides additional protection to Class I streams to improve fish habitat.	Would achieve DFC before all other alternatives. Similar to Alternative B, but provides additional focus on special status species.	Would achieve DFC about the same time as Alternative B. Same as Alternative A.

Wildlife	Would reach DFC in longer timeframes than Alternatives B and C.	Would reach DFC more quickly than Alternatives A and D, but less quickly than C.	Would reach the DFC before other alternatives.	Would take the longest to reach DFC.
Overall wildlife habitats would be maintained and conditions enhanced as individual projects and plans are developed and implemented.	Forested and sagebrush habitats would be enhanced but with a higher risk than Alternatives A and C of localized wildlife displacement. The loss of certain wildlife species and uses due to more active and widespread modification of forested communities, particularly in focus areas would also be greater than in Alternatives A and C. Short-term habitat losses and wildlife displacement would be compensated by increased habitat diversity over the long-term.	Wildlife habitat would sustain the least human-caused disturbance, with natural disturbances and succession having a greater influence on habitat conditions. Wildlife species dependent taller and denser plant communities with more structure would benefit.	More widespread impacts to forest and sagebrush habitats would occur under this alternative with highest risk of wildlife displacement and disruption of seasonal uses. Improvement in riparian/wetland habitat conditions would be slow.	
Geologic Resources	Unique geologic features would be protected from locatable mineral activities.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.
Paleontological Resources	Similar to impacts described for Cultural Resources.			

Soils	<p>Greatest risk for soil erosion due the greatest number of miles of routes designated for motorized use.</p> <p>Streambank erosion would be greatest under this alternative given the miles of riparian areas in NF and FAR condition.</p> <p>Some soil erosion from vegetation treatments would occur until vegetation regenerates.</p>	<p>Fewer miles of designated routes would result in less risk of erosion than in Alternative A.</p> <p>Streambank erosion would decrease under this alternative as riparian conditions improve.</p> <p>Soil erosion from vegetation treatments would be greater than Alternative A and C, but less than Alternative D. Impacts would first occur in three focus areas.</p>	<p>Potential for erosion would be the least over the life of the plan under this alternative since the fewest number of miles of roads would be designated as open to motorized travel.</p> <p>Streambank erosion would be of least concern under this alternative.</p> <p>Soil erosion from vegetative treatments would more than Alternative A but less than Alternatives B and D.</p>	<p>Potential erosion resulting from routes designated for motorized travel would be more than in Alternatives B and C, but less than Alternative A.</p> <p>Streambank erosion would be alleviated over the long term based on proposed riparian management.</p> <p>Soil erosion from vegetation treatments would be the greatest under this alternative given the number of acres proposed for treatment under this alternative.</p>
Special Status Species—<i>Birds and Mammals</i>	<p>Habitat suitability and conditions would be protected and improved in specific areas.</p> <p>Impacts to special status species movement and migration would be more likely to occur with localized case-by-case management.</p>	<p>Habitat suitability and conditions would be enhanced across broader areas of the landscape.</p> <p>Management of corridor areas to prevent fragmentation would enhance habitat and linkages available for special status species.</p> <p>Specific management for special status species emphasizes habitat protection and improvements for grizzly bear, sage grouse, and migratory birds on a broad scale.</p>	<p>Similar to Alternative B.</p> <p>Impacts from management of wildlife corridors would be the same as Alternative B with some additional protection for wolves and grizzly bear movement.</p> <p>Management enhances habitat condition and availability for special status species the same as Alt. B but also emphasizes more specific habitat protection and improvement for sensitive species on a broad scale.</p>	<p>Habitat suitability and conditions have the most potential to be altered due to vegetation treatments proposed in this alternative.</p> <p>Same as Alternative A.</p> <p>Management would benefit grizzly bear most, and other special status species to a lesser degree.</p>

<i>Special Status Species–Fish</i>		
Would take longer to reach DFC.	Would achieve DFC in less time than Alternative A and D, but longer than Alternative C.	Would achieve DFC in similar timeframes to Alternative B.
Uses conservation strategy to manage and protect westslope cutthroat trout habitat.	Same as Alternative A, but also protects concentrated spawning areas in streams with westslope cutthroat trout populations of 99% and greater purity.	Same as Alternative A.
<i>Special Status Species–Plants</i>		
Protects special status plants using watershed planning and rangeland health standards.	Provides additional protection for special status plants by minimizing surface disturbance from authorized activities and by implementing habitat management plans for priority species in riparian/wetland habitat and in sagebrush-steppe habitats.	Provides more protection for special status plants than Alternatives A and B by implementing habitat management plans on a broader scale specifically for plant values.
Increases information base on special status plants by partnering with others performing inventory on public lands.	Increases information base on special status plants to a greater degree than Alternative A through inventory of project areas as well as through partnerships.	Same as Alternative B.
		Impacts would be similar to Alternative B.
		Same as Alternative B.

<i>Vegetation—Forests and Woodlands</i>			
DFC would be achieved over longer periods of time than in Alternatives B and D.	Would achieve DFC more quickly than Alternatives A and C, but less quickly than Alternative D. More acres of Douglas-fir (warm/dry) forest types would be treated than in Alternative A, but less than proposed in Alternative D.	DFC would be achieved most slowly, treating fewer acres in most forest types, some not at all, and by limiting the types of tools that can be used outside of aspen restoration and wildland-urban interface areas.	Would achieve DFC sooner than other alternatives, treating the most acres in all forest types and using all tools.
Emphasis on treatment of vegetation that has missed two or more fire cycles would restore a more natural fire regime on a localized basis, mainly in the Pioneer and Gravelly landscapes.	Three areas identified as priorities for treatment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • southern Rubys • south Tobacco Roots • Barton/Idaho Gulch would be restored sooner than other areas in the DFO.		
Aspen would be restored in particular areas over time.	Would treat more acres for aspen restoration than Alternative A, but less than Alternative D.	Would restore the same amount of aspen over time as in Alternative B.	Aspen would be restored to a slightly greater degree under this alternative.
Forest and woodland vegetation within WSA boundaries would continue to evolve with fire suppression.	Wilderness values could be enhanced over the long term by vegetation treatments that would return forest and woodlands in these areas to a more natural fire regime.	Wilderness values could be enhanced with the use of prescribed natural fire.	Wilderness values could be enhanced over the long term as in Alternative B.
<i>Vegetation—Invasive and Non-native species, including Noxious Weeds</i>			
Introduction and spread of noxious weeds would continue.	Similar to A, but risks of impacts to values such as special status plants, occupied pygmy rabbit habitat, sage grouse breeding habitat, and mountain mahogany habitats would be weighed against noxious weed risks when determining control strategies.	Prohibition of aerial application of herbicides and pesticides could increase costs and possibly reduce effectiveness of noxious weed control in specific areas.	Impacts would be similar to Alternative A, except the potential for the greatest amount of disturbance under this alternative could increase the introduction and spread of weeds to a greater degree than any of the other alternatives.
Noxious weed threats would be reduced by using all tools and strategies to control weeds.			

<p><i>Vegetation–Rangelands</i></p>	<p>DFC would be achieved over longer periods of time than in Alternatives B and D.</p> <p>Would achieve DFC more quickly than Alternatives A and C, but less quickly than Alternative D, allowing use of all tools as appropriate.</p> <p>Three areas identified as priorities for treatment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • southern Rubys • south Tobacco Roots • Barton/Idaho Gulch <p>would be restored sooner than other areas in the DFO.</p>	<p>DFC would be achieved most slowly, treating vegetation to mimic specified fire return intervals with limited tools for most habitat types in areas outside of aspen restoration and wildland-urban interface areas.</p> <p>Would achieve DFC sooner than other alternatives, treating the most acres in all shrub types using all tools.</p>	<p>Riparian habitat conditions would be managed for PFC with improvement occurring as individual projects and plans are developed and implemented.</p> <p>Progress toward DFC would be the slowest under this alternative because riparian areas would be managed for PFC in many cases and not for DFC.</p> <p>Riparian and wetland habitat would sustain the least human-caused disturbance and achieve DFC before the other alternatives. Natural disturbances and succession would have a greater influence on habitat in this alternative.</p> <p>Alternative C would provide the most rapid improvement in riparian/wetland condition by implementing some of the same vegetation restoration projects as in Alternative B combined with the effect of not grazing some habitats, implementing rest or deferred grazing treatments or limiting forage utilization by livestock.</p> <p>Progress toward DFC would be slower than Alternatives B and C.</p> <p>Limiting riparian restoration treatments to only aspen types would also slow progress toward DFC.</p>
<p><i>Vegetation–Riparian and Wetlands</i></p>			

Visual Resources	<p>Visual quality could be impaired, especially in areas of mineral development and vegetative treatments.</p> <p>Visual quality could be impaired as in Alternative A, but application of management objectives and rehabilitation measures would reduce impacts.</p> <p>Visual quality would most likely remain the same as at present under Alternative C management, except for increased potential for catastrophic fire events.</p> <p>Visual quality would deteriorate the most under this alternative given the greatest amount of disturbance proposed to manage other resources and provide for uses and the increase in acres assigned to VRM Class IV compared to Alternatives B and C.</p>	Water	<p>Achieving water quality goals with proposed riparian management would take the longer than Alternatives B and C, but probably less time than Alternative D.</p> <p>Potential for water quality impacts would be less than D, but more than those projected under Alternatives B and C given the mix of uses and surface disturbing activities proposed in those alternatives.</p> <p>Continued fire suppression could result in an increase in erosion resulting from wildfire because fuels would continue to accumulate and increase the chance of large wildfires.</p> <p>Water quality goals would be attained more quickly than Alternatives A and D but less quickly than Alternative C.</p> <p>Increasing surface disturbance from vegetation treatments and other actions could increase short term impacts under this alternative in comparison to Alternative A. Reducing the number of miles of roads open to motorized use would decrease the potential for water quality impacts from erosion.</p> <p>Under this alternative erosion resulting from wildfire would be moderate in comparison to Alternatives C and D. This is because the combination of fuels reduction and vegetation treatments would be more moderate than for Alternative C and D.</p> <p>Water quality goals would be achieved most quickly under this alternative.</p> <p>Potential for water quality impacts would be the least compared to other alternatives given that less surface disturbing activities would occur under this alternative.</p> <p>Erosion resulting from wildfire would be similar to Alternative A.</p> <p>The greatest potential for short term impacts to water quality would occur under this alternative from reduction of surface cover due to vegetation treatments and forest product activities, as well as other surface-disturbing activities such as mining.</p> <p>Erosion resulting from wildfire would be the least under this alternative because the combination of fuels reduction and vegetative treatments would be the greatest.</p>	<p>Wild Horses and Burros</p> <p>There are no wild horse or burro herds within the planning area.</p>
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RESOURCE USES				
	No Action (Alternative A)	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D
Forest Products	<p>Production of forest products would continue at current levels with an annual average of 1.6 MMBF.</p> <p>Opportunities for firewood gathering by motorized means would be greatest under this alternative.</p> <p>The Tobacco Root Tack-on WSA would remain unavailable for harvest activities.</p>	<p>A Probable Sale Quantity of 6.6 MMBF would provide greater opportunities to obtain forest products from public land than Alternatives A and C.</p> <p>Firewood gathering by motorized means would be more limited under this alternative than Alternative A due to a decrease in motorized route designations.</p> <p>Release of the Tobacco Root Tack-on WSA would allow for potential harvest activities in that area.</p>	<p>A Probable Sale Quantity of 3.7 MMBF would provide opportunities to obtain forest products from public land to a lesser degree than Alternatives B and D.</p> <p>Firewood gathering by motorized means would be the most limited under this alternative since the least number of miles of roads are designated as open for motorized travel.</p> <p>Impacts would be similar to B.</p>	<p>A Probable Sale Quantity of 9.7 MMBF would provide the greatest opportunity to obtain forest products from public land.</p> <p>Firewood gathering by motorized means would be more restricted than under Alternative A but less restricted than under Alternative B or C.</p> <p>Impacts would be similar to B.</p>
			<p>The management of naturally ignited fires under this alternative could result in an increased loss of forest products, compared to Alternatives A,B and D.</p>	

Lands and Realty

Designates no right-of-way corridors for larger transmission lines/pipelines or right-of-way use areas for communication sites. Provides the most flexibility for locating these facilities, but could lead to a proliferation of separate rights-of-way and associated impacts.	Encourages the use of right-of-way corridors and use areas for the same facilities mentioned in Alternative A to limit impacts.	Impacts the same as Alternative B.	Impacts the same as Alternative B.
0% of the planning area would be designated as right-of-way avoidance areas.	Approximately 14% of the planning area would be designated as right-of-way avoidance areas.	Approximately 16% of the planning area would be designated as right-of-way avoidance areas.	Approximately 13% of the planning area would be designated as right-of-way avoidance areas.
0% of the planning area would be designated as right-of-way exclusion areas.	Approximately 0.7% of the planning area would be designated as a right-of-way exclusion area.	Approximately 0.7%+ of the planning area would be designated as a right-of-way exclusion area.	Same as Alternative B.
Approximately 90% of the planning area would be managed as a retention zone, though land adjustments could still occur if certain criteria were met. The remaining 10% would be managed to allow for the full array of land adjustment opportunities.	Approximately 16% of the planning area would be precluded from disposal by any method. Less than 1% (4000 acres) would be available for disposal by sale or other methods. The remaining approximately 84% would be managed primarily for retention but some limited land adjustments could occur.	Similar to Alternative B in that the same amount of land would be precluded from disposal by any method, but no sales of land, and no exercise of the right of eminent domain, would be allowed under this alternative, which would limit options to consolidate land patterns to a greater degree than Alternatives A, B and D.	Same as Alternative B, except that no exercise of the right of eminent domain would be allowed under this alternative, making it slightly less flexible than Alternative B, but more flexible than Alternative C in accomplishing land ownership adjustments.
Would achieve management goal for access using criteria and direction in 1989 State Director Guidance on Access. Would provide greatest flexibility in how and where access could be obtained.	Would achieve management goal for access with emphasis on acquiring access on those routes designated as "open" in the travel plan that lack legal access and on areas classified as Categories 1 and 2 for retention. Would provide somewhat less flexibility and more geographic focus on acquiring access than Alternative A.	The same as Alternative B, but with slightly less flexibility because of the right of eminent domain could not be expressed as in Alternatives A and B.	Same as Alternative C.

<i>Livestock Grazing</i>			
Current levels of grazing use would continue (113, 219 AUMs), with adjustments possible to meet rangeland health standards.	Grazing use levels could decrease up to an estimated 11% due to potential adjustments to protect concentrated WCT spawning areas, waterfowl production areas in the Centennial Valley Wetlands, and provide for sage grouse habitat.	Grazing use levels could decrease up to an estimated 50% due to potential adjustments to protect elk winter range, sage grouse breeding, special status plants, and WCT, and wetlands.	Same as Alternative A.
Approximately 46,469 acres would be unavailable for grazing.	Approximately 48,448 acres would be unavailable for grazing.	Approximately 66,111 acres would be unavailable for grazing.	Same as Alternative B.
<i>Minerals - Leasable</i>			
<i>Oil and Gas</i>			
Approximately 9% (129,316 acres) of federal minerals in the planning area would be unavailable for leasing.	Approximately 11% (145,554 acres) of federal minerals in the planning area would be unavailable for leasing.	Approximately 80% (1,086,596 acres) of federal minerals in the planning area would be unavailable for leasing.	Approximately 11% (143,857 acres) of federal minerals in the planning area would be unavailable for leasing.
16% would be subject to major constraints (NSO).	32% would be subject to major constraints (NSO).	9% would be subject to major constraints (NSO).	8% would be subject to major constraints (NSO).
43% would be subject to minor constraints (CSU/TL).	47% would be subject to minor constraints (CSU/TL).	1% would be subject to minor constraints (CSU/TL).	61% would be subject to minor constraints (CSU/TL).
32% would be subject to standard lease terms.	10% would be subject to standard lease terms.	10% would be subject to standard lease terms.	20% would be subject to standard lease terms.
<i>Coal and Oil Shale</i>	No development is projected so no impacts are anticipated.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.
<i>Phosphate and other Solids</i>	Approximately 91% (1,229,705 acres) of the federal minerals in the planning area would be available for leasing.	An additional 894 acres of federal minerals in the planning area beyond that available in Alternative A (1,230,599 acres) would be available for leasing resulting from release of the Tobacco Root Tack-On WSA.	Same as Alternative B.

<i>Geophysical Exploration</i>	Leasing and development decisions could be impacted due to restrictions on vehicular exploration in certain areas.	Travel restrictions and measures to protect resource values applied as a result of site-specific analysis could require adjustment of schedules or methods that could impede or limit data collection.	Same as Alternative B.	Same as Alternative B.
<i>Minerals - Locatable</i>				
	Less than 2% of the planning area (12,300 acres) would be withdrawn from locatable mineral entry.	Less than 1% of the planning area (2,305 acres) would be withdrawn from locatable mineral entry.	Almost 3% (25,992 acres) would be withdrawn from locatable mineral entry.	Less than 1% (70 acres) would be withdrawn from locatable mineral entry.
	Travel management would be the least restrictive for vehicular access to claim staking, exploration and casual use.	Travel management would be less restrictive than Alternative C, but more restrictive than Alternatives A and D for vehicular access for claim staking, exploration and casual use.	Travel management would be the most restrictive for vehicular access to claim staking, exploration and casual use.	Travel management would provide better access to highly mineralized areas than Alternatives B and C, and possibly A since routes to these areas were targeted to remain open in this alternative.
<i>Mineral Materials</i>				
	Designated wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas (14%; 129,204 acres) would be unavailable for new mineral material sites.	More restrictive than Alternative A, but less than Alternative C. No development of mineral material sites would be allowed on 15% (136,226 acres) of the planning area to protect wilderness, recreation, cultural, special status plant, and other values.	Most restrictive. Would limit the availability of mineral materials from public lands to currently existing mineral material sites (10 sites, 861 acres).	Similar to Alternative A, but would seek out potential sites in available areas and would develop the sites as the need and demand arises.

<i>Recreation</i>	<p>A diverse array of resource based recreation opportunities would be provided under Alternative A management.</p>	<p>Enhanced opportunities for wildlife viewing would be provided under this alternative. Improvement in fish habitats would expand and diversify fishing opportunities.</p>	<p>Recreational experiences dependent upon solitude and non-motorized activities would be enhanced under this alternative to a greater degree than in Alternative B. Seasonal road closures around sage grouse leks would discourage the public from accessing the strutting grounds, and slightly reduce the opportunities for wildlife viewing.</p>	<p>Quality of recreational experience could be lessened by greatest amount of surface disturbing activities resulting from various management actions. Recreationists could be displaced by certain activities.</p>
	<p>An unlimited number of outfitting permits available to licensed outfitters would increase opportunities for recreationists to enjoy outfitted hunting excursions.</p>	<p>Maintaining current levels of outfitted use would maintain the same level of current recreational opportunities.</p>	<p>A 15% reduction in authorized use levels for permitted big game hunting outfitters would reduce the supply of outfitted hunting opportunities below the level of demand that has been established through historical use.</p>	<p>An increase in authorized use levels for outfitted big game hunting would create additional opportunities for the public to enjoy guided hunting.</p>
	<p>Conflicts and impacts to improvements could occur at developed recreation sites not withdrawn from locatable mineral entry.</p>	<p>Withdrawal of developed recreation sites from locatable mineral entry would provide long-term protection.</p>	<p>Same as Alternative B.</p>	<p>Holding a right-of-way to protect developed recreation facilities would provide a level of protection, but may not eliminate potential conflicts to provide for maximum enjoyment of developed sites by recreationists.</p>

<i>Renewable Energy</i>				
Impacts to renewable energy development requiring land use authorizations would be related to impacts described under the <i>Lands and Realty</i> section.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.
Renewable energy development opportunities would be available across the planning area subject to review, but would not be approved within designated Wilderness or Wilderness Study Areas.	Renewable energy development opportunities would be less constrained than Alternative C, but slightly more restricted than Alternatives A and D in order to protect scenic values along the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail.	Renewable energy development opportunities would be most constrained under this alternative given the increased number of acres placed in right-of-way avoidance and exclusion areas.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.
Opportunities for biomass production resulting from vegetation treatment would continue as at present.	Opportunities for biomass production resulting from vegetation treatment would be greater than under Alternatives A and C, but less than D.	Opportunities for biomass production resulting from vegetation treatment would be slightly greater than Alternative A, but less than Alternatives B and D	Opportunities for biomass production would be greatest under this alternative given the amount of vegetation treatment proposed.	
<i>Travel and OHV Management</i>				
Least restrictive for travel.	Additional motorized travel restrictions in comparison to Alternative A would provide additional opportunities for solitude and quiet recreation.	Motorized travel opportunities would be the most restricted under this alternative.	Travel management would have fewer restrictions than Alternative B and C and more than Alternative A.	
<i>Transportation and Facilities</i>				
Maintenance of BLM roads and facilities would create safer conditions for the public and provide for administrative use.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.	
Maintenance activities requiring surface disturbance could remove vegetative cover or disturb landbased resources but mitigation measures or avoidance strategies would reduce or eliminate direct impacts.				
Improvement in the condition of roads or other facilities could result in increased use or traffic.				
<i>Utility and Communication Corridors</i>				
See <i>Lands and Realty</i> section.				

FIRE MANAGEMENT AND ECOLOGY				
<i>Wildland Fire</i>				
Would control a large percentage of fires at small acres in the short-term. Exposure of fire fighters and the public to danger and safety risks would be reduced in the short-term, but would increase over time.	Would allow for some flexibility to manage fires, but a large percentage of fires would be controlled at small acres.	Would allow for the most flexibility to manage fires with a smaller percentage of fires controlled on fewer acres. Effects would be similar to Alternative B.	Would allow for the least amount of flexibility to manage fires, but more fires would be controlled at small acres. Effects would be the same as Alternative B, with a decrease in the risk and exposure to fire fighter and public safety.	
Effectiveness of suppression efforts would decrease as fuels build up and a limited removal of forest products occurs.	Risk of large, high intensity wildfire would be reduced. Suppression effectiveness would increase and reduce risks to communities due to reduction in conifer encroachment within or adjacent to wildland urban interface and removal of forest products.	Would manage fires for resource benefits based on specific parameters for areas that are designated as Category D. Overall risk to communities and fire fighter safety is compromised as the amount of available fuel increases near wildland urban interface areas.	Would reduce the risk of large, high intensity wildfire through forest vegetation treatments and restoring fire return intervals in the rangeland vegetation.	
Management of WSAs under current control fire suppression strategies would limit the opportunity to manage fires in these areas.	Treatments in WSAs would enhance wilderness values and would allow for greater flexibility in managing wildland fires.	Small number of acres allowed for the removal of forest products would not benefit fire suppression effectiveness.	Suppression effectiveness would increase in treated areas.	
		Would maximize the flexibility of fire management strategies in WSAs. This would allow for opportunities to manage larger fires for resource benefits.	Same as Alternative A.	

<i>Prescribed Fire</i>	<p>Number of acres converted to historical fire regimes would be the least under this alternative. More acres in the planning area would move into Condition Class 3.</p> <p>More acres would be converted to historical fire regimes than under Alternatives A and C. Treated areas would pose less risk to fire fighters and the threat to public safety would be reduced.</p> <p>The number of acres converted to historical fire regimes from prescribed fire treatments would be less compared to Alternatives B and D.</p> <p>Mitigation to address wildlife concerns could limit the extent, size of treatment, or preclude prescribed fire altogether.</p> <p>The most acres would be converted to historical fire regimes under this alternative. Available fuel would decrease over the long term. Vegetation change would move the most acres of any alternative into Condition Classes 1 and 2.</p> <p>Mitigation to address wildlife concerns such as unit location and timing of the treatments could affect project scheduling.</p>	<p>Costs for rehabilitation would be less under Alternative B because fewer acres would be projected to burn. Conflicts with other resource values would be less than under other alternatives.</p> <p>The potential for a greater number of acres to be burned would result in an increased amount of disturbance and greater rehabilitation costs than under Alternatives B or D.</p> <p>Same as Alternative A.</p> <p>Same as Alternative B.</p>
<i>Rehabilitation</i>		

SPECIAL DESIGNATIONS			
<i>Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs)</i>			
None of the thirteen Potential ACECs would be designated. Special management provisions would be considered on a case-by-case basis as projects or actions proposed within their boundaries.	Special management provisions would be applied to about 8% (73,184 acres) of the planning area with the designation of eight ACECs, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beaverhead Rock • Block Mountain • Blue Lake • Centennial Mountain • Centennial Sandhills • Everson Creek • Muddy Creek/Big Sheep Creek • Virginia City Historic District 	Special management provisions would be applied to about 1% (9,701 acres) of the planning area with the designation of two ACECs, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Block Mountain • Centennial Sandhills. 	Special management provisions would be applied to about 25% (227,067 acres) of the planning area with the designation of 13 ACECs, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beaverhead Rock • Big Sheep Creek Basin • Block Mountain • Blue Lake • Centennial Mountains • Centennial Sandhills • Centennial Valley Wetlands • Everson Creek • Ferruginous Hawk Nesting Areas • Lewis and Clark Trail • Muddy Creek/Big Sheep Creek • Virginia City Historic District • Westslope Cutthroat Trout Habitats with >99% purity
	<p>The relevant and important resource values of the remaining five areas would be protected through standard management provisions identified throughout Alternative B.</p> <p>The relevant and important resource values of the remaining 11 areas would be protected through standard management provisions identified throughout Alternative C.</p>		
<i>Back Country Byways</i>			
Retaining the designation of the Big Sheep Creek Back Country Byway would provide for an identified pleasure driving opportunity.	Same as Alternative A.	Removing the Big Sheep Creek Back Country Byway designation would remove an identified location for pleasure driving.	Same as Alternative A.

<i>National Recreation Areas</i>				
There are no National Recreation Areas within the planning area.				
<i>National Trails</i>				
<i>Bear Trap Canyon National Recreation Trail</i>	No activities are anticipated that would impact management of the Bear Trap Trail.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.
<i>Continental Divide National Scenic Trail</i>	No activities are anticipated that would impact management of the CDT.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.
<i>Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail</i>	Restrictions on oil and gas leasing and development within 300 feet of the trail would provide limited protection to the setting and visual character along the trail.	More protection from potential impacts would be provided under this alternative than in Alternative A by increasing the distance of no surface occupancy to 1/2 mile on either side of the trail.	The most protection from potential impacts would be provided under this alternative since the trail would be designated a right-of-way avoidance area to eliminate visual intrusions and the Upper Horse Prairie segment of the trail would be designated as VRM Class II to further protect the trail from visual intrusions.	The trail would be protected from visual intrusions under this alternative, but with less restrictive measures.
<i>Nez Perce National Historic Trail</i>	Restrictions on oil and gas leasing and development within 300 feet of the trail would provide limited protection to the setting and visual character on either side of the trail.	More protection from potential impacts would be provided under this alternative than in Alternative A by increasing the distance of no surface occupancy to 1/2 mile on either side of the trail.	Same as B.	The trail would be protected from visual intrusions under this alternative, but with less restrictive measures.

<i>Wild and Scenic Rivers</i>			
Continuing interim management of eight eligible river segments to protect free-flow, outstandingly remarkable values, and tentative designations could limit or preclude certain activities, uses or authorizations.	None of the eight eligible river segments would be found suitable for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system.	All of the eight eligible river segments would be found suitable for inclusion into the Wild and Scenic River System. All segments would be managed to protect and enhance resource values which could limit or preclude certain activities, uses or authorizations activities on public lands that would impact the free-flow, outstandingly remarkable values, and tentative designations.	Same as Alternative B.
Resource values would be managed under the standard provisions identified throughout Alternative B.			
<i>Wilderness</i>	Wilderness values in the Bear Trap Unit of the Lee Metcalf Wilderness would continue to be managed and preserved.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.
<i>Wilderness Study Areas</i>			
Ten (10) WSAs would continue to be managed for non-impairment of wilderness values.	Nine (9) WSAs would be managed for non-impairment of wilderness values. Release the Tobacco Roots Tack-on would not impact wilderness values as the area is adjacent to areas that the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest has emphasized motorized recreational use.	Same as Alternative B.	Same as Alternative B.
Continuing to allow snowmobile use in certain WSAs would prevent opportunities for solitude and quiet recreation in these areas.	Same as Alternative A.	Closing all WSAs to snowmobile use would provide additional opportunities for solitude and quiet recreation, but decrease snowmobiling opportunities.	Same as Alternative A.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS				
Economics				
<i>Agricultural and Livestock Use</i>	<p>Livestock grazing (actual use) would support 26 total (direct, indirect, induced) jobs and total labor income of \$395,000. Dependency of local livestock operators on BLM forage would remain at about 2.0 % of total livestock forage needs. 268 operators have grazing permits on BLM public lands. BLM forage often provides a critical element of the livestock producer's matched complement of grazing, forage, and hay production. Livestock grazing would continue to generate about \$116,000 in annual government revenues.</p>	<p>Livestock grazing (estimated actual use) would support 23 total (direct, indirect, induced) jobs and total labor income of about \$352,000. Dependency of local livestock operators on BLM forage would be about 1.8 % of total livestock forage needs. Changes in grazing management would be spread unequally among an estimated 115 permittees. Economic effects would vary among individual operators. Livestock grazing would generate about \$103,000 in annual government revenues.</p>	<p>Livestock grazing (estimated actual use) would support about 13 total (direct, indirect, induced) jobs and total labor income of about \$198,000. Dependency of local livestock operators on BLM forage would be about 1.0 % of total livestock forage needs. Changes in grazing management would be spread unequally among an estimated 197 permittees. Economic effects would vary among individual operators. Livestock grazing would generate about \$58,000 in annual government revenues.</p>	<p>Same as Alternative A</p>
<i>Forest Products</i>	<p>The combined effect of 2.1 MMBF of timber sales would be 48 total jobs and \$1.275 million in labor income. This would more than double total jobs and labor income that over the past 24-year period averaged 21 jobs and \$558,369, respectively. Timber sales would generate \$210,000 in government revenue.</p>	<p>The combined effect of 3.6 MMBF of timber sales would be 81 total jobs and \$2.185 million in labor income. Timber sales would generate \$360,000 worth of government revenue.</p>	<p>The combined effect of 0.7 MMBF of timber sales would be 15 total jobs and \$425,000 in labor income. Timber sales would generate \$70,000 million worth of government revenue.</p>	<p>The combined effect of 5.9 MMBF of timber sales would be 135 total jobs and \$3.581 million in labor income. Timber sales would generate \$590,000 worth of government revenue.</p>
<i>Recreation</i>	<p>An estimated 311 total local jobs and \$6.67 million in total labor income would be supported by 335,000 recreation visits per year on public lands. The amount of revenues generated by special recreation use permits and user fees is \$29,000.</p>	<p>Since the change in recreation use is unknown, the employment and labor income effects would also be unknown. Revenues generated by user fees and special use permits would be unknown.</p>	<p>Since the change in recreation use is unknown, the employment and labor income effects would also be unknown. Revenues generated by user fees and special use permits would be unknown.</p>	<p>Since the change in recreation use is unknown, the employment and labor income effects would also be unknown. Revenues generated by user fees and special use permits would be unknown.</p>

<p><i>Mining and Mineral Production:</i> No oil or gas exploration, development, or production occurs on federal lands. It is assumed that up to 10 exploration wells could be drilled within the planning area and one producing well and two step-out wells would occur with federal minerals. Oil and gas exploration would create 16 FTE direct jobs per well, assuming each well would take up to 300 days to drill. Annual direct labor income would be about \$781,000 per well. Two longer-term direct jobs would be supported by oil and gas development and production. Longer-term direct labor income associated with development and production would be \$100,000. Government revenues from federal lease rentals would be \$51,000; after five years this would increase to \$68,000. Annual royalties from production of federal minerals would approach \$2.65 million.</p>				
<p><i>Government:</i> Total employment and labor income related to local BLM salaried government employment and non-salaried government expenditures would be about 101 jobs and \$4.2 million, respectively.</p>				
<p><i>Economic dependency</i> (where one or a few industries dominate the economy)</p>	<p>Livestock grazing on public lands provides forage for 2.0 % of all livestock in the two counties. The proportion of BLM timber sales in the two counties would increase from a 24-year average of 5 % to an estimated 11 %. Total number of jobs and total amount of labor income stimulated by casual and authorized uses on BLM land equals about 5 % of the total jobs and 7.6 % of the total 2000 labor income reported in Beaverhead and Madison counties.</p>	<p>Livestock grazing on public lands would provide forage for up to 1.8 % of all livestock in the two counties. BLM would provide about 17% of all timber sales in the two counties. Total number of jobs and the total amount of labor income stimulated by casual and authorized uses on BLM land would increase slightly but not enough to affect dependency of the local economy on economic activity related to BLM resource management.</p>	<p>Livestock grazing on public lands would provide forage for up to 1.0 % of all livestock in the two counties. BLM would provide about 4% of all timber sales in the two counties. Total number of jobs and the total amount of labor income stimulated by casual and authorized uses on BLM land would decrease slightly but not enough to affect dependency of the local economy on economic activity related to BLM resource management.</p>	<p>Livestock grazing on public lands would provide forage for up to 2.0 % of all livestock in the two counties. BLM would provide about 25 % of all timber sales in the two counties. Total number of jobs and the total amount of labor income stimulated by casual and authorized uses on BLM land would increase slightly but not enough to affect dependency of the local economy on economic activity related to BLM resource management.</p>
<p><i>Economic stability</i> (indicated by seasonal unemployment, sporadic population changes, fluctuating income growth rates) and economic diversity (indicated by the number of economic sectors) would not be influenced by BLM resource management.</p>				
<p><i>Government Revenues</i></p>	<p>Government revenues from BLM management would be: from livestock grazing (\$116,000); timber sales (\$210,000); oil and gas lease rentals (\$51,000-68,000); oil and gas production royalties (\$2.65 million).</p>	<p>Government revenues from BLM management would be: from livestock grazing (\$103,000); timber sales (\$360,000); oil and gas lease rentals (\$51,000-68,000); oil and gas production royalties (\$2.65 million).</p>	<p>Government revenues from BLM management would be: from livestock grazing (\$58,000); timber sales (\$70,000); oil and gas lease rentals (\$51,000-68,000); oil and gas production royalties (\$2.65 million).</p>	<p>Government revenues from BLM management would be: from livestock grazing (\$116,000); timber sales (\$590,000); oil and gas lease rentals (\$51,000-68,000); oil and gas production royalties (\$2.65 million).</p>

<i>Weed Management:</i> Economic benefits from weed management and costs (in terms of reduced agricultural output, reduced recreation use, increased soil loss and water pollution (sedimentation and turbidity) associated with the spread of weeds are unknown.			
<i>Soil and Water:</i> Economic benefits from soil and water management and costs (from lost agricultural production, additional costs for municipal water treatments, shortened life of dams and reservoirs, additional cost of water for industrial purposes, reduced water recreation use, reduced soil productivity, and water pollution) associated with resource use are unknown.			
<i>Fire/Fuels:</i> Economic benefits from fire and fuels management (beyond those covered under forestry management) and potential costs (in terms of property losses, lost revenues from wildland fires, and increase suppression costs) associated with hazardous fuels buildup are unknown.			
<i>Environmental Justice</i>			
No disproportionate adverse impacts to minority or low income populations considered under environmental justice guidance would occur.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.
<i>Health and Safety</i>			
<i>Abandoned Mines</i>			
In general, remediation of abandoned mine lands would improve or restore stream function and rangeland health. However, removal of tailings piles or mill tailings could result in concurrent removal of valuable mineral resources.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.
<i>Debris Flow</i>			
There are no current concerns with debris flows in the planning area.			
<i>Hazardous Materials</i>			
Adhering to federal and state requirements would protect environmental conditions in the planning area. Public exposure and environmental impacts would be minimized to the extent possible by following emergency response procedures in the event of unauthorized use or accidental incidents.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.

<p>Indian Trust Resources</p> <p>There are no Indian Trust Resources within the planning area. See the <i>Cultural Resources</i> and <i>Tribal Treaty Rights</i> sections for discussion on traditional use areas and off-reservation treaty rights.</p>			
<p>Social</p>			
<p>Would provide benefits to those who value livestock grazing and those who value motorized activities. Social well-being of those who would give a very high priority to resource protection and those who value non-motorized activities would decline.</p>	<p>Livestock grazing, the availability of roads for motorized activities, resource protection and use activities, and opportunities for solitude and non-motorized activities would be allowed at levels between Alternatives C and D.</p>	<p>Would provide the most benefits to those who would give a very high priority to resource protection and those who value solitude and non-motorized activities. Social well-being of those who value traditional uses of public lands and motorized recreation would decline.</p>	<p>Would provide the most benefits to those who value traditional uses of public lands for livestock grazing, mining, forest products and motorized recreation. Social well-being of those who value traditional uses of public lands and motorized recreation would decline.</p>
<p>Tribal Treaty Rights</p>			
<p>Land tenure adjustments could reduce the area within which tribal treaty rights could be exercised, because public lands within the planning area could be utilized in land exchanges to acquire public lands in other parts of the Montana/Dakotas, outside of the traditional use areas of the Shoshone-Bannock and Confederated Salish-Kootenai tribes.</p>	<p>Using lands within the planning area for statewide exchanges could remove lands used to exercise off-reservation treaty rights. Disposal of up to 4,000 acres of scattered tracts, potentially by sale, could reduce lands available to tribal members, though most if not all tracts are inaccessible.</p>	<p>Impacts would be similar to Alternative B, though no lands would be available for sale.</p>	<p>Impacts would be the same as Alternative B.</p>
<p>This alternative would provide the best motorized access for tribal members using public lands.</p>	<p>Motorized access would be more restricted than in Alternatives A and D, but opportunities for solitude would be increased.</p>	<p>Motorized access would be more restrictive than the other alternatives, but opportunities for solitude are the greatest.</p>	<p>Motorized access would be less restrictive than Alternative B and C, but more than A.</p>